ADBUSTERS

JOURNAL OF THE MENTAL ENVIRONMENT >> NOV/DEC 2001 >> NO.38

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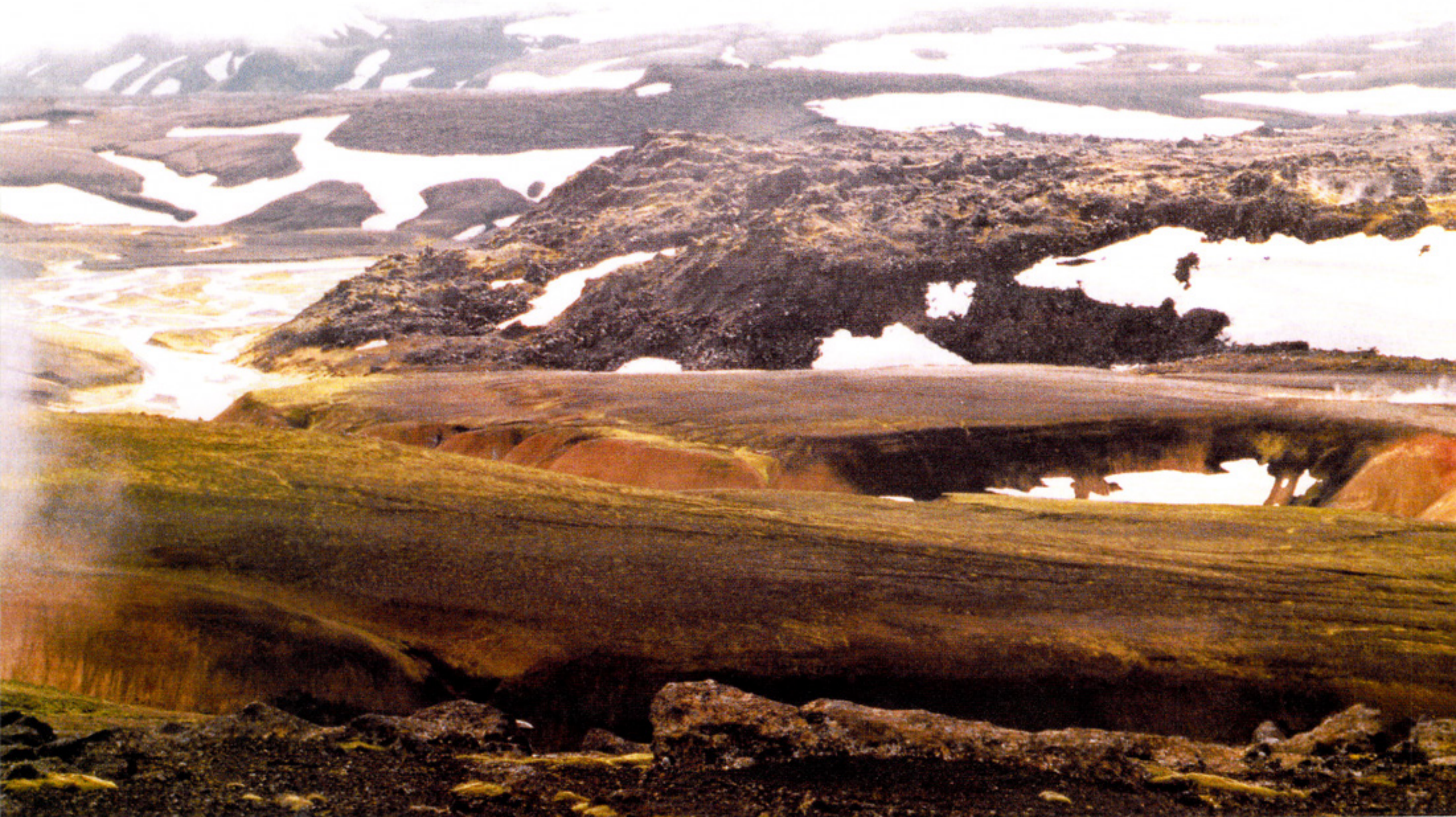
VOL. 9 NO. 6 NOV/DEC 2001

*WHAT'S MY DAMAGE?

THE BIRTH OF MENTAL ENVIRONMENTALISM



I

1 Beneath the midnight sun, the orange silence of the world's largest lava desert. I find myself singing a breakfast-cereal jingle that has been perfectly preserved — a memory fossil — for going on 24 years. This is the kind of thing that fills the empty space. Another example: the beach at Dyrhólaey is black sand and gray sea and a distant white glacier, and it reminds me of photos of my mother as a little girl. I'm not sure how to feel about this until a soundtrack cues in my head, something by maybe James Horner.

Iceland. It was my mother's idea. For my health.

"Think of the things you *won't* see," she said. "The sounds you *won't* hear."

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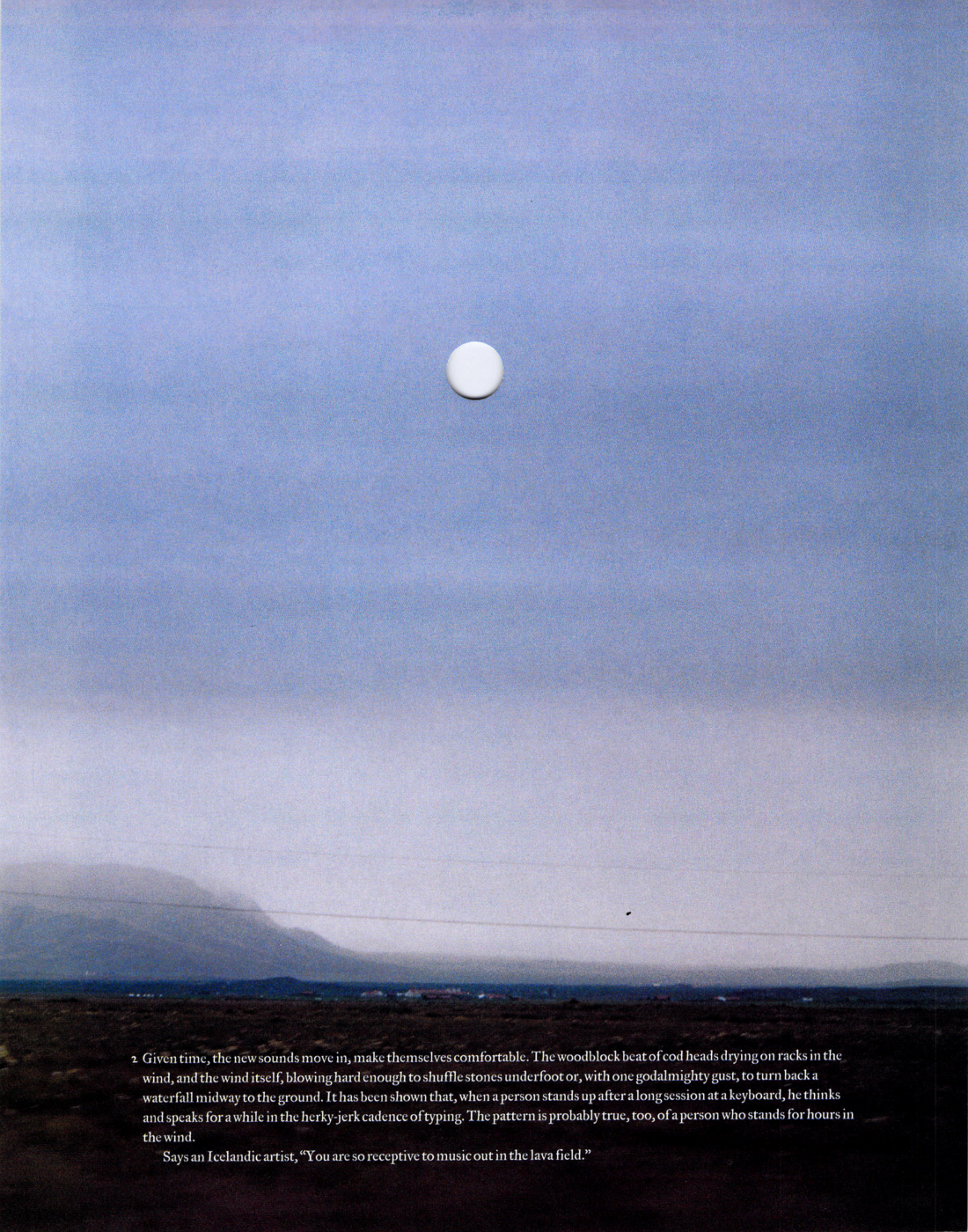


2 Given time, the new sounds move in, make themselves comfortable. The woodblock beat of cod heads drying on racks in the wind, and the wind itself, blowing hard enough to shuffle stones underfoot or, with one godalmighty gust, to turn back a waterfall midway to the ground. It has been shown that, when a person stands up after a long session at a keyboard, he thinks and speaks for a while in the herky-jerk cadence of typing. The pattern is probably true, too, of a person who stands for hours in the wind.

Says an Icelandic artist, "You are so receptive to music out in the lava field."

3 When you retreat, when you back away, hands in the air, from the non-stop circus, when you commit to undiluted time in a monastery or a solo campsite or in meditation, one fear overwhelms all others: the fear that you will be bored. When you return, the sensation is reversed. Now you fear the end of your serenity. The sound of morning traffic is an assault, the first song on the radio is a haunting. The sight of a newspaper makes you nauseous.

4

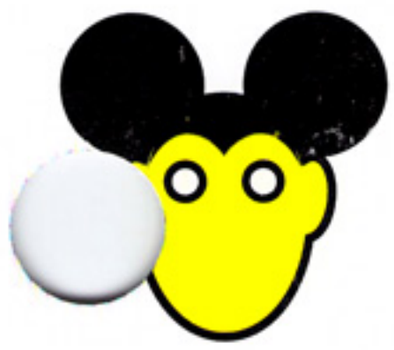
4 "It started raining, very innocently at first, but the sky was packed tight with clouds and gradually the drops grew bigger and heavier, until it was autumn's dismal rain that was falling — rain that seemed to fill the entire world with its leaden beat, rain suggestive in its dreariness of everlasting waterfalls between the planets, rain that brooded oppressively over the whole countryside, like a disease, strong in the power of its flat, unvarying monotony, its smothering heaviness, its cold, unrelenting cruelty. ...And the heavy, hopeless, interminable beat wormed itself into every crevice of the house, lay like a pad of cotton wool over the ears, and embraced everything, both near and far, in its compass, like an unromantic story from life itself

that has no rhythm and no crescendo, no climax, but which is nevertheless overwhelming in its scope, terrifying in its significance."

That's Icelandic author Halldór Laxness, on rain. I understand what he's saying, here, in the city. He's writing about noise, and not noise like a drunk shouting somewhere in the streets an hour before dawn, but like a million drunks shouting constantly, at all hours, in every street, inescapable and neverending. Surround sound. Rain is only the gentlest metaphor, because, of course, rain stops.

And then the first email, and already I'm forgetting the black sand, the lava desert.

Re:
I've got a great idea for a next movie. I say I'll make a movie about how fucked up we all are. make a movie about how fucked up society is and make it about being all fucked up in this crazy fucked up society.



AD CREEP

My mother stares intently, trying to gauge the seriousness of my request.

Institutionalize.

Crazy as I want to be, I don't fit the mold. But dreamily, this is my wish. Not to be crazy, per se, but to be deemed insane enough to take a mental vacation. I don't want to escape my problems – more like give myself more time to contemplate them.

TARA GYORFY, *Denver, Colorado*

All around me I see people consuming adventures in search of a full life. It's all a search for freedom and escape. But really, it's our minds that need to set sail. SUSANNA CONAWAY, *Washington, DC*

Here in Colombia, we are totally trendy, totally contaminated. No matter which social level people belong to, they keep on playing the game. In many cases it does not matter if their basic needs are totally fulfilled or not.

For instance, on our Pacific coast, some people live in houses made out of wood just in front of the sea or beneath the mangrove, many times without sanitary system or in not very healthy conditions. But they do invest their money in buying the biggest TV or the most noisy stereo, devices that keep them on dreaming with ridiculous consumption patterns.

PAOLA ANDREA
Bogotá, Colombia

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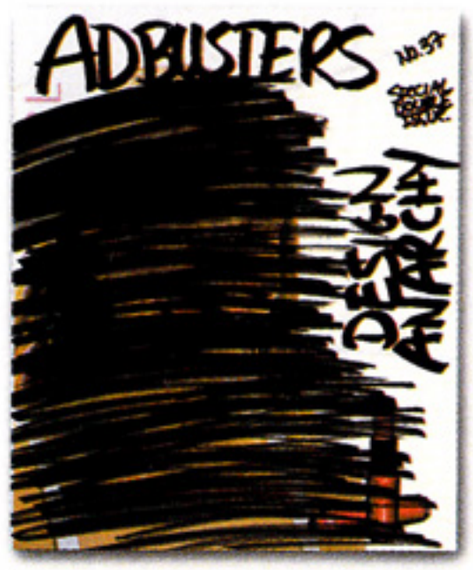


DESIGN ANARCHY

Working as a graphic designer for almost 10 years, I've become pretty disillusioned with my industry. Your latest issue, "Design Anarchy" [*Adbusters* #37], confirmed what I've come to believe: We can no longer deny that we are, and have been, the corporate tool – used to manipulate citizens into accepting or ignoring everything from disintegrating democracy and human rights abuses to worldwide environmental destruction. This is all for corporate profits and the preservation of the lifestyles of rich people in rich nations.

A. BARBER
Toronto, Ontario

How does this headline sound? "Five hundred designers, armed with mind bombs, persuade billions, set new standards."

No one wants to replace capitalists with stylish idealogues. Simply changing the message of propaganda (from consumption to sustainability, etc.) will not create conditions in which people have more control of their lives. Communication is required – that means mostly in-person communication, some mediated, very little one-way. Otherwise, those 500 – or 500,000 – mind-bomb throwers only reproduce the culture trust in a new form. Everyone is a designer. No more oligarchies, no more vanguards.

D. J. RICARDO
Berkeley, California

We're enjoying the recent issue about design, seeing it's the profession we confess to. Refreshing to read your pages of the plain truth, so help us God. Some of us know all too well what ought to be done to curtail the glut of stylized BS. The trick is getting the clients to slow down and see exactly what mess they leave behind when they hire us designers to materialize their schemes.

DARREN ONYSKIW
Vancouver, British Columbia

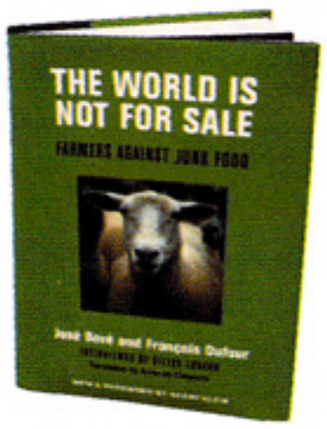
Your "Stooge Series" tobacco warning labels were thought-provoking and unique. But the reality is, those designs would probably never fly.

From my experience as the designer of the existing health warning labels (the ones with the graphic images), one of the biggest challenges we faced was that it became a political battle more than a communication issue. A strong possibility existed that the major tobacco companies would file lawsuits against Health Canada for any possible "false" accusations about the effects of tobacco smoke.

The designs have been in circulation for less than a year, and the response has been across the spectrum – from people mocking and collecting the packs, to those who have actually quit because of the graphic images. It is for those people who have been deterred or have quit that I feel the campaign is a success.

NAME WITHHELD

I am going to be entering my second year at the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design. Since I've read the design issue, I realize that there are lots of options out there besides doing



José Bové, the French farm workers' union leader, was sent to prison after bulldozing a McDonald's restaurant. Now an international pro-democracy movement leader, he explains, together with Francois Dufour, why food is political and gives his own guide to good farming.

The World is Not For Sale: Farmers Against Junk Food by José Bové and Francois Dufour, VERSO BOOKS, 2001, 240 PAGES, $25.00.

"A step-by-step, blow-by-blow account of how the public was robbed of its most precious cultural resource, the public airways, and how citizen action can take it back." – George Gerbner, author of *The Future of Media*

Air Wars: The Fight to Reclaim Public Broadcasting, by Jerold M. Starr, BEACON PRESS, 2000, 338 PAGES, $27.50, <WWW.BEACON.ORG>

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advertising and such stuff for big corporations that are not interested in helping the planet or the people on it.

CHRIS TOMPKINS
Fredericton, New Brunswick

Where is the harm in injecting a little beauty into the otherwise clinical world of functional objects, especially if they are lower-impact than their predecessors? Criticizing the stylized chair, the lemon juicer and the house as "masturbation," you're attacking aesthetics. What then keeps us from extending this argument to the point of labeling all art, your own designs included, as useless, mindless pap?

STEWART STONE
Wolfeboro, New Hampshire

Do you really believe you are going to change the world through design? It's elitist garbage. Where's your class analysis? Maybe you guys should leave your cushy office and walk around in the real world. You may be up in sales, but you've compromised your politics.

KRISZTINA KUN
Victoria, British Columbia

What has happened to *Adbusters*? It used to be a very thought-provoking magazine for conscientious consumers. Now it has turned into an empty-minded designers' excuse. *Adbusters* used to carry the subtitle, "Journal of the Mental Environment." No such noble commitment in this last issue.

K.J. TRABOLD
Salmon Arm, British Columbia

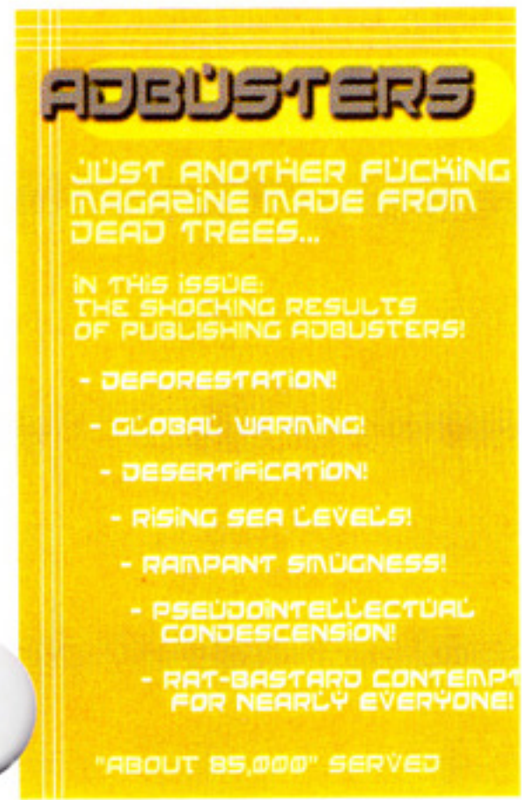
The July 2001 *Harper's* magazine reports the average amount that workers in an El Salvador factory are paid for each $12.99 Gap T-shirt they sew: 11.6 cents.

BRYAN HENRY
Austin, Texas

I would really like a TV cozy [*Adbusters* #37]. I only use my television when I rent a movie – about once a month. A cozy would humanize its cold black angles when not transporting me into '30s pre-code or '40s noir.

SUE JACOBY
San Francisco, California

Eds: Sorry, but this is a do-it-yourself project.



Loved the design issue. Thought I'd submit my own cover idea.

MIKE ANDERSON
Vancouver, British Columbia

Today I got my latest *Adbusters* and the whole goddamn thing is written solely for designers. What about all the rest of your readers who aren't marketers or designers? You are getting too insider-ish for your own good.

DAVID HUNTER
Shelburne, Massachusetts

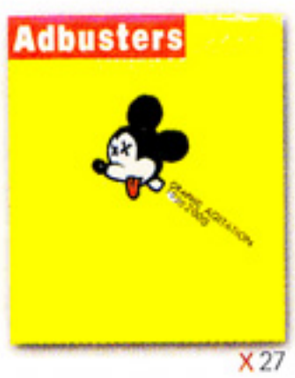
Full-page photos of grass? You could get your message across with less space and waste fewer trees. I find it incredibly ironic that your last issue had a spread that said in 72-point type, "Masturbation: Repetitive, Self-serving, Addictive." That's exactly what your magazine has become – masturbation for your designers.

LINDA CHANDLER
Chicago, Illinois

SPAM

Back in 2000 I was on the board of the San Francisco American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA). At one meeting we were given the task to create a "get out the vote" poster. I (and others) suggested that the best way to select a designer would be a) to open up the project to students at local design colleges, the demographic that consistently demonstrates a reluctance to vote. Or b) to solicit designs from anyone, post them on the web, and allow the public to vote for the winner. The board decided to assign the project to probably the most famous designer in San Francisco.

This practice of rewarding the inner circle of the design elite has become increasingly overt. Witness your own *First Things First* manifesto, signed by a long list of recognizable names. I understand the power of celebrity endorsement, but surely a populist manifesto begs a more populist approach, just as a campaign to encourage the voices of the unheard deserves to be open to more than just those who already enjoy uncommon media access. In these



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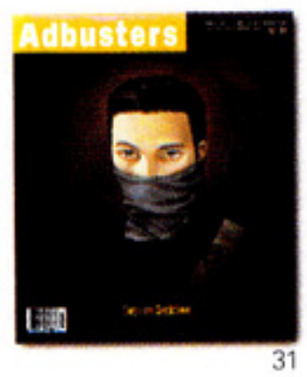

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two cases, the process undermines the product.

NAME WITHHELD

In your design issue you claim, "There are a thousand fast-food typefaces but only one McFont." Well, there's more than one. I designed "McLawsuit" over a year ago. See <www.down10.com/fonts/mclawsuit.shtml>.

JESSE D. BURGHEIMER
San Francisco, California

Call us stupid, but we can't guess what word Ernst Bettler's four posters for Pfafferli + Huber spelled out [*Adbusters* #37]. It's driving us crazy.

JENNIFER PAHLKA

Eds: Another hint. The first letter was "N."

JAMMER REPORT

Your recent stink bomb campaign ["The Smell Of Swoosh," *Adbusters* #36] seems like an incredibly counterproductive exercise. I have always considered your "mental bombs" to be effective, non-violent and respectful protests, and conducive to positive reactions. The counter-corporate globalization movement needs to rise above these energies in order to bring mass positive change. You cannot fight fire with fire.

BENNIE GORDON

The biggest problem we have in bringing down the corporation ["Corporate Crackdown Continues," *Adbusters* #35] is that it has incredible rights in the eyes of the law. This so-called "natural person" has not been brought to justice because it has no opponent of equal or greater rights.

If there is going to be anything bigger and more powerful in the eyes of the law, it is definitely going to be *nature*. We must find a way to get nature as a whole recognized as a "natural person" in the eyes of the law. For starters, it is living. The corporations can't even claim that.

DAVE BEDICZ
Guelph, Ontario

I glanced at the page with the seed packet glued to it several times [*Adbusters* #35], thinking how nice the design was. After closer examination of the colored dots scattered around, I realized that the seed oils had leached through the packet and the white pages around it, creating a colorful design. Is this irony or what? Your magazine printed two plain white pages, and nature's chaos turned it into a colorful masterpiece!

RAY DIOS HAQUE

Stump is a memory resident program that watches the printer queue, counting the number of pages you and printer consume [a project

by design engineer Natalie Jeremijenko]. When you have consumed a tree's worth of pulp, it prints out a slice of the tree you have consumed.

Eventually you assemble a stump of the forest that you have consumed, a tangible representation of your paper consumption, a material demonstration of otherwise abstract information. Click on the stump link at: <www.cat.nyu.edu/~natalie/OneTree/OneTreePres_files/v3_document.htm>.

WESTON TRIEMSTRA
Vancouver, British Columbia

I'd like to do an ad urging "green" businesses to stop all forms of advertising for a week. Is there an Ad-Free Week? If there isn't, should we create one? (I work in advertising; consider it penance.)

ANDREW LOK
Republic of Singapore

Consider what good could be done if all the world's culture jammers turned an eye towards the people suffering in their communities – the people suffering not as a result of corporate evil, or the AOL Time Warner merger, but for simple lack of work, food, money, or adequate medical care.

These people couldn't care less if some preachy, fashionably intellectual twentysomething desires to "kill their TV," or whatever other slogan you've plastered on a billboard. Consider sending your subscription dollars to your local homeless shelter or foodbank. You may think that *Adbusters* is "saving minds," but a redirection of your charity could actually save lives.

ALEXANDER PAYNE

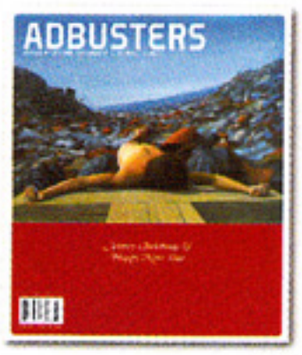
Image is thirst.
Everything is Nothing.
Drink Sprite.

NICK SHERMAN
San Francisco, California

MEME WARFARE

What *Adbusters* is advocating is not just the destruction of consumer culture, but the destruction of the only economic system that keeps us in our comfortable lifestyle. *Adbusters* wants a revolution. But like a kid kicking a sandcastle, *Adbusters* doesn't know what to build in its place.

Yes, capitalism has its social problems and its impact on the environment, but what are the alternatives on a revolutionary scale? Maybe



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X = SOLD OUT

Adbusters has come up with a better vision for the future, but as an average reader, it hasn't sunk in with me. All I see is anti-design design. Substance doesn't seem to follow style.

DAVID SRIGLEY
Toronto, Ontario

I think you're full of horse shit with your ineffectual and pedantic culture jams and campaigns. You subvert the very redistribution of power you frequently call for by acting like a kind of sieve. Your "revolutionary" viewpoints and calls to action are nothing more than a kind of catharsis, letting us know that "someone feels like me."

A better description of your organization would be something like an emotional enema leading to incomplete evacuation of the diseased bowels, though the source of the foulness is in the pit of the gut.

You're working at the wrong end. Real change happens with focus and organization, not with polite suggestions to throw seeds in an empty lot or bark at disadvantaged school systems for installing Channel One.

BRYAN MICHAEL QUEEN
Birmingham, Alabama

Imagine a summer oasis. You usually hurry past the Starbucks on every corner, but this time you notice something unusual – a good old-fashioned lemonade stand on the sidewalk in front of Starbucks. "Is this their latest marketing gimmick?" you wonder. But you approach because you are curious, and, if it is a marketing scheme, it is sort of cute. But upon arrival, you realize that it is no gimmick at all. It is just your neighbor, selling ice-cold lemonade at five cents a cup (just to cover costs) and offering some neighborly conversation.

No sales pitch or secret political agenda. Lemonade and conversation. Pure and simple. If Starbucks can saturate our environment, then there's no reason why the people who actually live there can't, too.

RYAN MURDOCK
Evanston, Illinois

ART CONTRIBUTORS – NO.38

ICELAND PHOTOS:
UNA KNOX

MENTAL ENVIRONMENT PHOTOS:
MIKE SIMONS

CULTURAL REVOLUTION IS OUR BUSINESS

We are a loose global network of artists, writers, environmentalists, ecological economists, media-literacy teachers, reborn Lefties, ecofeminists, downshifters, high school shit-disturbers, campus rabble-rousers, incorrigibles, malcontents and green entrepreneurs. We are idealists, anarchists, guerrilla tacticians, pranksters, neo-Luddites, poets, philosophers and punks. We see ourselves as one of the most significant social movements of the next 20 years. Our aim is to topple existing power structures and forge a major rethinking of the way we will live in the 21st century. We believe culture jamming will become to our era what civil rights was to the '60s, what feminism was to the '70s, what environmental activism was to the '80s.It will alter the way we live and think. It will change the way information flows, the way institutions wield power, the way TV stations are run, the way the food, fashion, automobile, sports, music and culture industries set their agendas. Above all, it will change the way we interact with the mass media and the way in which meaning is produced in our society.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT US
Visit the Culture Jammers Campaign Headquarters at www.adbusters.org

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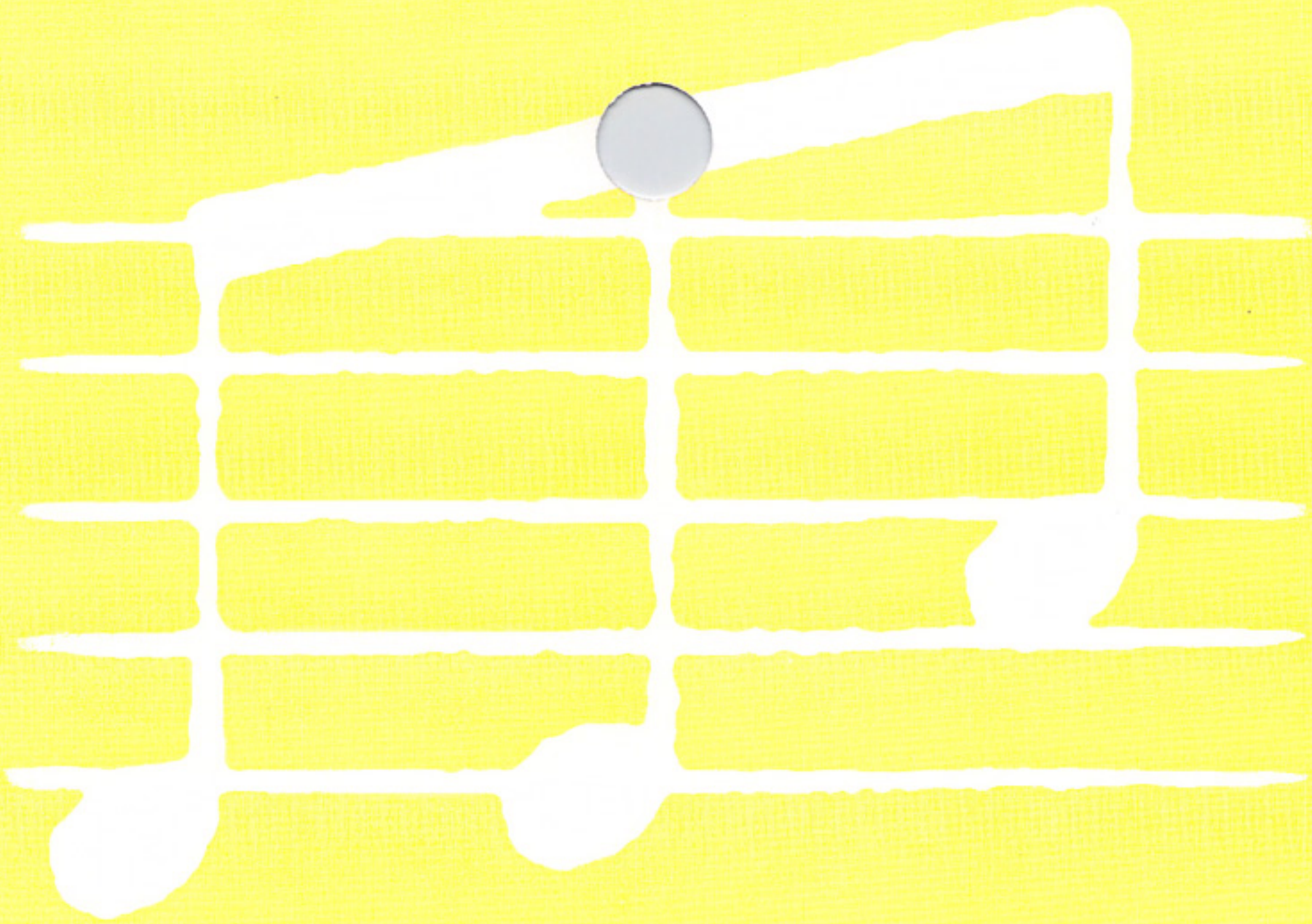


6 Iceland and all that, it started with a drink after work. I had called home to check messages; there was only one.[7] If I'm understanding correctly, my friend needs help, so she's helping herself by avoiding other people who need help. Like me.

I know it's boring when a person can't stop talking about some place they've just seen, but still. There's a church in Iceland, the Strandarkirkja, where you can make a prayer for all sailors at sea, for every one of us lost between swells and far from port and battening down for heavy weather. It must be doing brisk business, that church.

7 "...and they told me you can tell how depressed a person is by how depressed you are when you walk away from them after talking to them. I think that's true. So I'm sorry, but I've been staying away from human downers — which means I have to avoid a lot of my former friends and about 50 percent of the people at work but it's made quite a difference. I feel a lot more upbeat..."

8 It's getting harder to talk to anyone

about anything because the anything is bound to be grim, and everyone is plenty grim enough, thank you very much. No one is sane enough to hear you out, to play the sounding board. A friend of mine told me she had called up a crisis line just to have someone else shoulder the cross for awhile, and it was out of my mouth before I knew what I was saying.

"What, you think the crisis line people don't have enough problems?"

I took this mood with me to the bar, where it was some kind of theme night sponsored by Benson & Hedges cigarettes, and I pulled up a stool beside this miracle man, some kind of modern untouchable Jesus this guy was so full of *zip* and *zing* and *zest for life*. A bit freaky, yes, but there was something to be learned here, I thought, until the conversation took a certain turn. He had just glanced at his watch.

"You seem to know a lot about music," he said, though I couldn't precisely remember having said a single word on that topic.

"I try to keep up."

"You should check out this band," he said, pulling a new CD out of his bomber jacket pocket. "This is, you know, 'Next Big Thing' kind of stuff."

He was getting up from his stool. "What — like I can keep this?"

"Just pass it along," he said. "This is the kind of thing your friends will thank you for."

He was definitely starting to move away from me now. I watched him ease into the crush of beautiful young people, head for a quiet spot against a wall. He pulled another CD out his shoulder bag and slipped it into his pocket. Then I got it. My new friend there was in marketing. He was on to his next score. I had been given exactly the recommended amount of time for delivery of the product to a person of my type, which to be perfectly honest is not much of a fucking trendsetter.

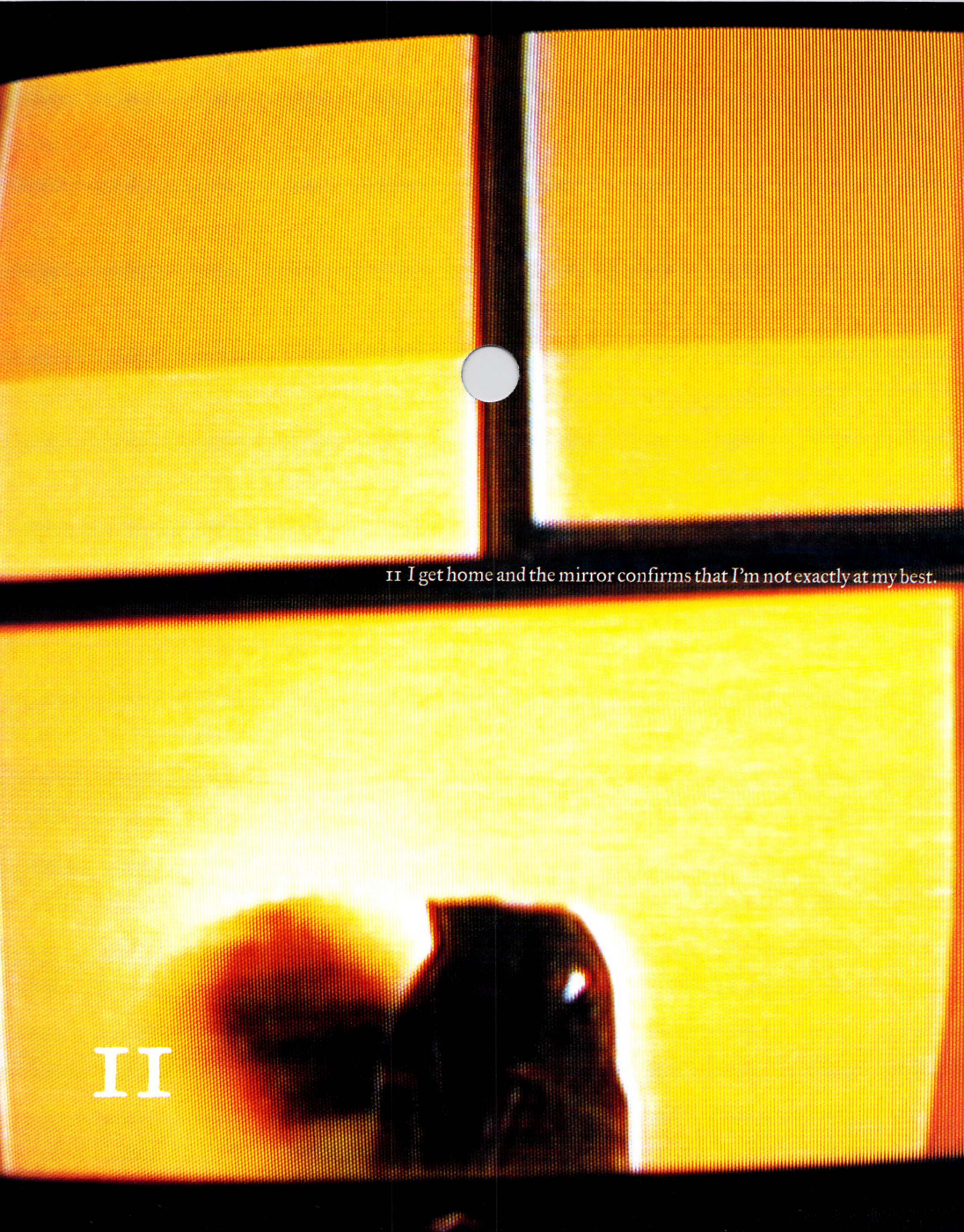
My new friend. I remember starting towards him through the crowd, but things happened pretty fast after that.

9 Out on the street again, moving quickly. People shouting the usual midnight threats[10] from car windows, and once, even, from a limousine sunroof. Finally I get to my neighborhood and by now my pulse is in my temples, two long black patches of sweat on my chest, like an x-ray of my lungs. Sponsored by Benson & Hedges. Finally I get to the billboard, lean against the base to catch my breath. I notice that I leave behind a bloody handprint.

Usually women in billboards lose their appeal after a time, but not this one. I pass under her spotlights as often as possible. Weirdly, it feels a little like fidelity. As friends go, at least she's consistent. She has been here through, by my estimate, two full fashion cycles.

I suspect she's been forgotten by her keepers. I am beginning to wonder if she might be immortal.

10 As I carried my bags up Main Street, people yelled at me from their cars: "Get a job!" "Fuuuuuck!" This yelling is an odd custom I have encountered all across the US. These are the voices of an angry and frightened society, a jaded and profane society. —"Things I Like About America," Poe Ballantine, *The Sun*, July 2001



11 I get home and the mirror confirms that I'm not exactly at my best.

II

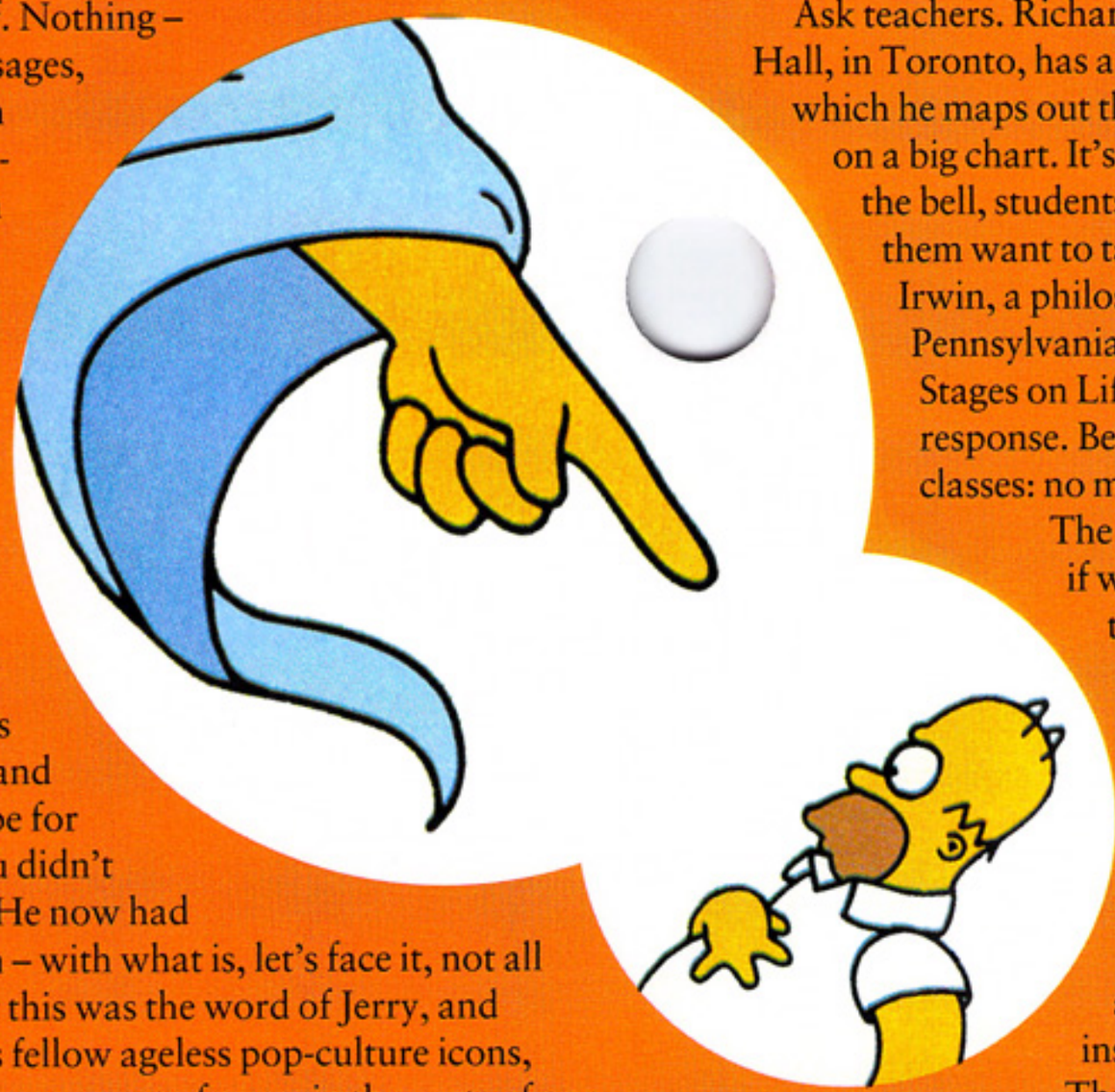
There's another bloody handprint, stickier this time, on the bathroom counter, but by now I can see that the cut is pretty small, a split knuckle flexing open and closed like a tiny mouth. I've never seen myself like this — my instinct is to go for the camera and collect a souvenir. I am my own personal roadside attraction. I'm a car wreck, I'm a coyote standing on the double yellow line of six-way traffic in the middle of town, I am the World's Loneliest Payphone I am maybe the Fucking Grand Canyon.

Have you ever had a panic attack?

Listening To Homer

Why the 'Seinfeldesque' is turning Kafkaesque

On a recent Sunday at a United Church in Vancouver, the sermon was underway and folks were beginning to nod off. Nothing – not the bulletin messages, not the reading from Luke, not even a personal anecdote from the pulpit, was connecting. This called for a change of tack. "Jerry Seinfeld said, 'Life is like a roller-coaster ride,'" the minister said. "'It takes your money, from time to time it makes your hair stand up, and the best you can hope for in the end is that you didn't puke.'" Big laughs. He now had everyone's attention – with what is, let's face it, not all that clever a bit. But this was the word of Jerry, and Jerry, along with his fellow ageless pop-culture icons, takes up an enormous amount of space in the parts of our brain labeled "Stuff to Remember" and "Points to Ponder" and "Ways to Live."



In weekly Bible-study classes, some American churches are now using episodes of *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *The Brady Bunch* to teach scripture lessons, and have seen attendance double, the *New York Times* reports. *The Simpsons*, newly anointed as America's most moral show, is being similarly mined for its spiritual value, the observations of Lisa studied as if they were the words of Christ. Postmodern culture seems positively pregnant with meaning, which is leveraged for profit as our stories are sold back to us.

Time was, if we needed to teach a lesson, moral or otherwise, the examples we reached for were our own; Life's Little Instruction Book was one we assembled from experience. Those days have been boxed, remaindered and pulped. In every venue, mediated life is simply more compelling than the real thing.

Ask teachers. Richard Haigh, a law professor at Osgoode Hall, in Toronto, has a lecture he gives for an equity course in which he maps out the interweaving plotlines of *Pulp Fiction* on a big chart. It's a reliable hit; instead of zipping out at the bell, students often stay to talk – although "most of them want to talk about *Pulp Fiction*, not law." William Irwin, a philosophy professor at King's College in Pennsylvania, has taught "Kramer and Kierkegaard: Stages on Life's Way" to equally enthusiastic response. Because it's fun. Fun classes are popular classes: no mystery there.

The real mystery is, why should we value – if we can define "value" as pay attention to, talk about, and identify with – our own life-events less than the life-events of characters we see on TV and in the movies (especially since the writers who invent those characters mostly just raid their own experiences for material)? When something funny or unusual happens to us, it is canonized as a Seinfeldesque moment. At that instant, it comes to life.

Thrown into any new situation, the mind trolls for meaning. It pumps for context. And what it calls up, often as not, is something from the great pop-cultural image bank.

Recently, an Air Transat A330 Airbus bound for Lisbon lost both engines over the Pacific. As the flight crew scrambled, the minds of passengers went primal. Thoughts and images issued from the deepest part of the brain, perhaps in the soul. Interviewed afterward, one passenger, a high-school student named Vasco Dos Santos, admitted that as the plane plunged, "All I kept seeing was *Cast Away*, *Air Force One* and *Con Air*."

In the end the pilot performed a miraculous "dead-stick" landing and everyone lived. Kind of like when Marge saved Springfield from the hurricane with a well-chosen prayer.

Bruce Grierson

m.e.* index

*Mental Environment

· In September, California Governor Gray Davis announced the end of an era: the state has no future plans to add to its freeway system, and will instead focus on mass transit. The Index breathes just a little bit easier.

· Not so fast. In the same media reports, experts announce an expected wave of "Interstate nostalgia." "We're addicted to the vulgarity of highway culture, the promise of Slurpees at 2 a.m.," says one. "That's not going to change." The Index gears down, hears a death rattle in the transmission.

· Also in California, West Hollywood ad wars are now resulting in the loss of limbs.

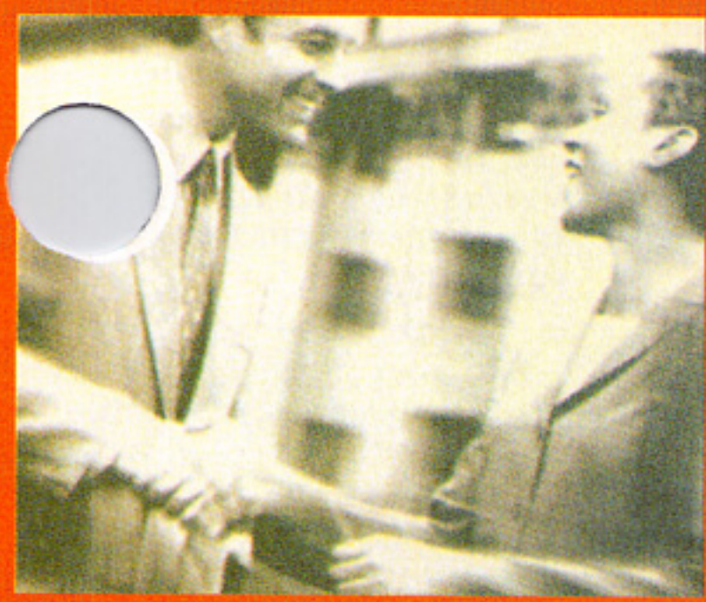
Tobacco Advertisers Announce A Global Retreat. So, Are We Winning?

In August, a "secret report" fell into the hands of the hard-digging muckrakers down at Advertising Age. Leaks are usually embarrassing (e.g. a report to the Czech government that shows smokers reduce national health care costs – by dying young), but this time the story was PR-perfect. The documents reveal that British American Tobacco, Japan Tobacco and Philip Morris are working together to scale back their advertising around the world. "Tobacco products should be marketed in a reasonable manner . . . consistent with the principle of informed choice."

Okay, so the "leak" is clearly deliberate. But why? If tobacco is in retreat, isn't it a victory for tobacco opponents? That depends on whether you want to win battles or to win the war – and Big Tobacco always has its eye on the war. Here's the strategy:

· The World Health Organization is leading negotiations toward a Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. On the table is a possible total, global tobacco ad ban. The tobacco giants, fresh from a hugely profitable push into relatively unregulated areas such as Southeast Asia and the former Eastern Bloc, are revving up the PR. "They're obviously trying to head off meaningful regulation by coming up with some kind of voluntary code," says Patti Lynn of INFACT, a Boston-based anti-tobacco group. "There are countries from all corners of the globe calling for an ad ban."

· The tobacco companies are offering a self-imposed ban on, for example, ads that appear on the outside covers of any publication; show models who appear to be younger than 25; involve product placement; link smoking to athletic, professional, sexual or social success; or make use of celebrities. The list is impressive, but so, too, is the list of loopholes. Some of the proposed rules are softer than North American or European tobacco regulations, while others are plainly ineffective (e.g. a ban on advertising within 100 meters of a school – as though parents will be comfortable with billboards 105 meters away.) Even the most specific restrictions contain some wiggle room. Consider the ban on the use of celebrities; INFACT argues that tobacco advertising's greatest celebrity is the Marlboro Man – an entirely fictional icon untouched by the voluntary code.



· With a complicated voluntary code on the table, the WHO negotiations are likely to slow. This buys time for tobacco firms to lobby governments and settle into their new world markets. As one source at the World Health Organization office in Geneva puts it, "They are still doing everything they can to sell a product that kills half its regular users."

No Matches Found

Websites operated by just four corporations account for 50.4 percent of the time that US users of the Web are spending online. –Jupiter Media Metrix

Before you start your search on the net, be prepared to take what you find with a grain of salt: you're getting nothing like unbiased results.

According to Commercial Alert, a consumer watchdog group, at least eight search engines, including Lycos, Netscape, HotBot, MSN.com, AltaVista, Direct Hit, LookSmart and iWon.com, fail to clearly indicate when search results have been paid for by advertisers.

"In the Internet age, search engines are critical to the quest for learning and knowledge," said executive director Gary Ruskin. "If the search engines are hijacked by commercial advertisers, this can degrade the quality of information going to users, which decreases their ability to discharge their civic duties."

Ruskin is optimistic his complaint will be sympathetically heard by the Federal Trade Commission, given the precedents. Infomercials have to be clearly labeled, and deceptive ads are banned by the FTC.

For a full report, see <www.commercialalert.org>.

Aiden Enns

In a single night in August, hatchetmen chopped 15 street trees to half-height, the worst case yet of illegal trimming to clear billboard sightlines. "This went from low-intensity guerrilla warfare to this onslaught," said a local city councilman. The Index shakes like a leaf.

· Apparently unable to decide between

chiffon and taffeta, Macy Gray decided to wear an advertisement instead. Appearing at the MTV Video Music Awards, Gray first peddled her ass, then built more marketing hype into her acceptance speech. The Index prefers thank-yous to Mom and God.

· In other MTV-branded news, the station's program *The Real World* was hit by culture

What Gramma Never Taught You

But then again, did you ask her?

Luddism is . . . hip? Affirmative. Seems everyone is now committed, in word if not deed, to recapturing the make-it-don't-buy-it noncommercial innocence of a simpler time, by learning skills that went out with the war. Quilting bees! Fruit-canning! Jennifer Aniston, we're told, makes her own crockery. Winona Ryder knits. No doubt Johnny Depp plays canasta when he's not trashing hotel rooms.

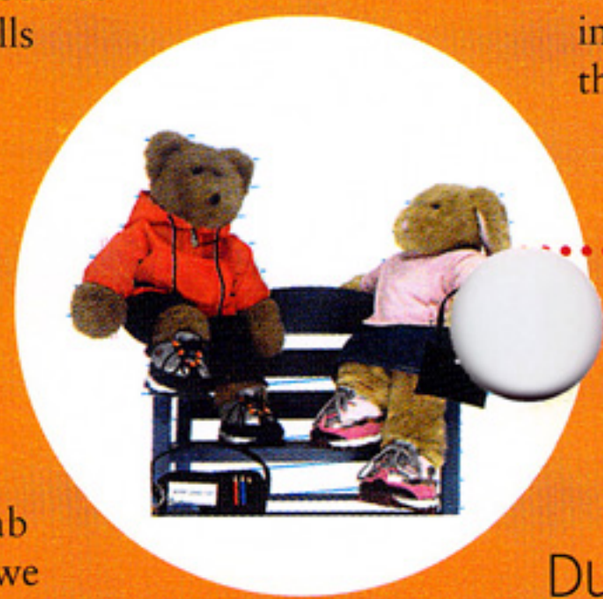
And down trickles the mojo. Now – for a price – we can all grab a piece of nostalgia for pastimes we don't actually recall. The "experience retailers" are working tirelessly to manufacture collective cultural memories for a new generation.

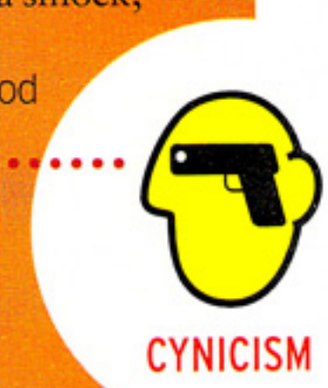
With 53 stores in its current arsenal, the US chain Build-A-Bear has announced plans for over 300 more, including 30 in Canada. This shop gives customers the basic materials to sew their own teddy bears, like the ones gramma used to make for you out of buttons and old wool socks (or not). You stuff it and stitch it yourself, and you end up with a bear that looks, well, pretty much like everyone else's bear. The more you customize it – with it a voice-chip, a heart, a name, a birth certificate – the more you pay. This year, the company expects sales of $100 million.

Meanwhile, out west, North Seattle Community College has a new course called "Retro Fun." It offers instruction in sewing, bicycle repair, swing dancing, pie-baking and the like, and is pulling 'em in by the bushel. This is valuable information.

Of course, most of it is already available in an existing, free archive. It's called old people. Many of those moldering alone in nursing homes would no doubt eagerly mentor any visitor through the preparation of a pie crust or the sewing of a smock, if anyone ever asked them.

Harry Flood



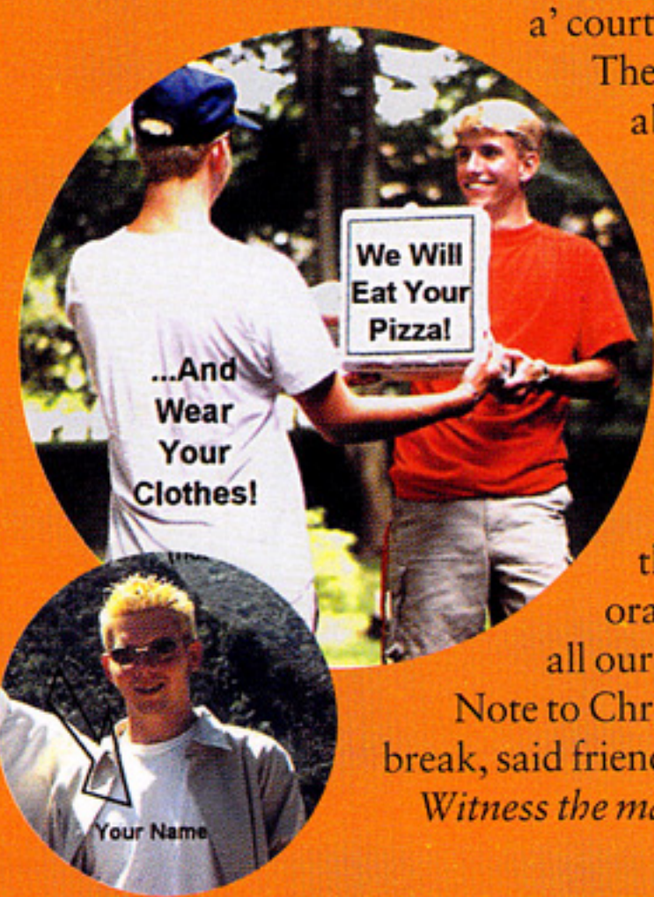


Chris & Luke II

Dude, Where's My Soul?

When last we checked in on New Jersey teenagers Chris Barrett and Luke McCabe [*Adbusters* #33], they had declared their bodies, their homes – hell, their whole lives – for sale to the highest bidder, in their quest to become the first corporate-sponsored college students.

Did it work? Do chickens have personal-boundary issues? The media devoured this story. The boys' mugs were splashed across dozens of broadsheets and "news" shows around the world. As their exposure grew, sponsors came a' courting. The boys had to get their own publicist. They'd made it clear that they were not choosy about clients: they'd wear your t-shirt, fly on your airline, eat your cereal ("even if we're not hungry"). As Frosh Day drew near and tuition payments loomed, they settled on the appropriately named US First, a financial-planning outfit. "We were so impressed with the entire company," the boys said. (Translation: They offered mad loot.) As official "spokesguys," their chief duty seems to be badgering everyone they know, Amway-salesman-like, with corporate boilerplate. "We will help fellow students and all our friends start out on the right financial foot."



Note to Chris and Luke: Don't be surprised if, by spring break, said friends are never home when you call.

Witness the madness at <www.chrisandluke.com>.

Staff

pranksters in July. The show, which puts carefully selected youth-with-attitude under constant surveillance in cool studio apartments, came to Chicago this summer. The welcome wagon came soon after: Hoping to break the cast members' media trance, some 350 activists chanted "Free the *Real World* 7!" and splashed red paint on the door. The merry-prankster antics led to arrests, with police committed to defending *The Real World* from the real world. "As I was handcuffed, Kafka never felt more like a sitcom," says actor liberation movement activist Nato Thompson. Caught between worlds, the Index struggles to keep a grip.

· Culture jammers scored a victory in London, however, when a trendy clothes store, Boxfresh, created a Zapatista logo and advertised the brand

American Psycho

Editors react to conclusive violence study: Kill! Kill! Kill!

After two and a half years, researchers Brad Bushman and Craig Anderson of the University of Iowa had a blockbuster study in hand. It pointed, decisively, to troubling conclusions about a social problem at the core of an ongoing national debate. The findings appeared as the lead article in *American Psychologist*, the flagship of their field. Colleagues were applauding. And then came the mainstream media reaction.

"A lot of silence," says Bushman flatly.

Here, in a nutshell, is the story the media missed. Bushman and Anderson carried out an exhaustive review – a "meta-analysis" – of every existing study of the link between media violence and real-life violence. The result: Research has indicated a clear connection since at least the 1970s, and the body of evidence has been growing ever since.

"I think the mass media, like the tobacco industry, is producing a harmful product," says Bushman. "I don't know if this has much to do with the silence, but I have to suspect so."

Broadcasters consistently argue the violence we see on TV, in film and in video has little if any relation to the violence real people carry out in their lives. According to Bushman and Anderson, however, the correlation between media violence and real-life aggression is stronger than that between calcium intake and bone mass, for example, or condom use and sexually transmitted HIV, or even homework and academic achievement.

"Most people are surprised when they look at those figures," says Bushman. "Why are they surprised? They're surprised because this is not the impression they've picked up from the media."

SOUL SHOCK

News reporting on the effects of virtual violence does appear to be changing – for the worse. As evidence of the link between media violence and the real deal climbed steeply throughout the '90s, the news media increasingly reported the link to be weak. One key problem, Bushman and Anderson argue, is "a misapplied fairness doctrine," by which news reports balance the plain and prudent scientific evidence with the coolly contrarian denials of teen video-game maestros, popular actors and other entertainment insiders and consumers.

"Everybody deserves to be heard," says Bushman. "But opinions should not be given equal weight with the results of scientific studies."

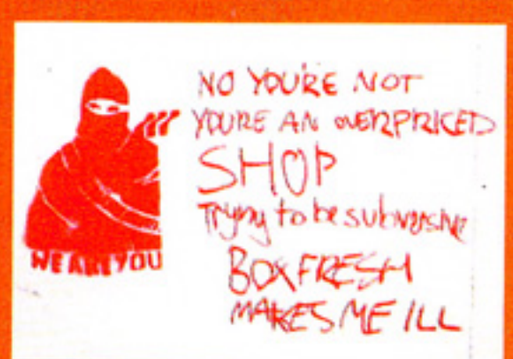
The *American Psychologist* report is only the latest to declare that the real-life costs of media violence are now beyond reasonable doubt. The first such statement came as early as 1972, from the US Surgeon General. That warning was reiterated in July 2000, when six prominent American medical, psychological and psychiatric organizations signed a joint statement on the hazards of exposing children to on-screen violence.

Still the media beat rolls on. Recent research shows that the average American child now spends 40 hours per week consuming media, and will witness more than 8,000 murders on network television before graduating from elementary school. Violent media – easily understood across global cultural barriers – threatens to become America's most valuable export commodity. Meanwhile, reliable newsroom watchdogs are increasingly rare; following a flurry of industry mergers, most of North America's major print news outlets are under the same corporate umbrellas as the television broadcasters, film studios and video game manufacturers that profit most from violent entertainment.

If reporters and editors are ducking the virtual realities, however, there is some hope for a push for change from an unexpected direction. According to a more recent Bushman study, sex and violence on television actually distract viewers from the most important content of all – the commercials.

"What we are finding is that when people watch a program with violence or sex, they think about violence and sex," said Bushman. "The sex and violence registers much more strongly than the messages the advertisers are hoping to deliver."

James MacKinnon



with a street graffiti campaign. The Space Hijackers (www.spacehijackers.co.uk) responded to the corporate co-option with Internet slagging, counter-graffiti and finally by dressing as Zaps to hand out protest flyers at the shop itself. "You caught us with our pants down," admitted Boxfresh's owner, but the Zapatista merchandise is still out there. The Index rises up, shouts *la lucha continua!*

· Jamming just keeps on getting more challenging. In September, three Canadians were charged with eating their ballots – in one case liquefy with soy milk and fruit – to protest the lack of real citi-

Puzzling Evidence

A portrait of the artist as a possible sellout

On August 1, Microsoft Corp. announced that the new Windows XP operating system includes a "promotional song" by David Byrne, founder of the seminal 1980s art-rock band the Talking Heads and an artist widely recognized for independence and innovation. "Like Humans Do" (sample lyric: "I never watch TV except when I'm stoned") was chosen for its wide appeal, said company spokesman Dave Fester. "I think users are going to really enjoy listening to the song while experiencing all the exciting new digital music features of Windows XP."

The news broke on the fan bulletin board at <davidbyrne.com> the next morning at 10:29 a.m., with a single dry comment: "I thought David was an avid Mac-user." What follows is the edited story of the next 28 hours.

12:16/HERO RIC/ Hey David…The late comedian/ satirist Bill Hicks gave a strict warning to artists, "You do a commerical, you're off the artistic roll call forever. You're just another corporate shill, a whore at the capitalist gangbang." My day's ruined. I have so few heroes to begin with. I'm sorry that you've been dropped from my list.

12:30/AMANDA/ Ric, think of this: Anyone who creates anything and wants to share it is selling – it may be for free, but it's still selling.

12:35/PM/ Bill Gates and David Byrne are kind of made from the same mold. Both are nerds who created their own revolutions. I don't see David "selling out." I just hope nothing else changes because of his latest venture.

13:35/GAYLA/ It's not like Microsoft said to David, "Write us a song about the new operating system"! Instead, David wrote a good song and someone at Microsoft said, "Great bitchin' song, let us play it for everybody (and give [Byrne] a big check)"…This kind of interfacing with corporations can actually be a way to make progress; the corps have the power, we piggyback (without losing integrity) to spread our message.

14:32/TEXAS TOM/ I sure wish people would stop bashing David on here for this Microsoft deal…David does not owe us anything, much less an explanation as to why he made this deal with Microsoft. Just enjoy the music!!

23:16/QUA/ Is Byrne not already being sold by a mega huge corporate biggy (Virgin Records)? Hmmm…let's think a little about that.

08:47/G.JIM/ I've just heard about the Microsoft thang…and boy am I disappointed. I genuinely felt that you, David, were one of the artists who'd never knuckle down…you are (were?) an artist, David. Now you're a salesman. Sure you don't go door to door, but the world knows that your voice can be bought… How can we ever feel confident that you speak the truth?

09:25/TEXAS TOM/ I could understand getting upset with David if he was singing for McDonald's, all of those innocent cows dying so we can have a Big Mac, but I just guess I'm missing the point with these objections to this Microsoft deal. I just have one wish for David (to quote one of his songs), "Well I hope you're happy with what you've made/Puzzling evidence/In the land of the free and the home of the brave/Puzzling evidence."

10:25/NINA/ Every time I read a post expressing how not wrong this is I feel more and more disappointed with people. …I wonder when you'll start missing your freedom and stop being sheep, or is it already too late?

11:01/TEXAS TOM/ Hey Nina, are you not reading this message right now on a computer powered by Microsoft? Welcome to the herd little lamb!!

11:21/G.JIM/ Texas Tom, I too am using a computer powered by Microsoft, but that completely misses the point. We are all of us forced to make compromises; forced to live in a world not of our own making. …But Tom, there's a world of difference between grudgingly living within the current compromised society we have inherited, and actively embracing, nay, supporting and adding to it.

12:19/TEXAS TOM/ Keep spreading the magic, David, and more power to you!!

12:38/TEXAS TOM/ Now I'm really confused. On Francey's website there is a new news posting about an interview with David…I'm going to go ahead and copy it here.

Q. Much of your Talking Heads material is pretty paranoid. Do you still feel anxious about external forces controlling our lives?

A. Yeah, mostly corporate interests, multinational corporate nation states, advertising and marketing, and media owned by large companies…the whole paranoid package. I'm not afraid of air, but I am afraid that the air, the water, the earth, the electromagnetic spectrum even – all are being contaminated…I do think that artists, musicians, writers etc. exist as a counter-force, a kind of discreet resistance to the encroaching waves of garbage that forever threaten to engulf us all. This makes me less paranoid, somewhat hopeful…

Now I'm wondering what David is thinking and doing? His response to that question seems to contradict his actions with Microsoft. I still love his music but this whole affair is confusing the hell out of me!!

14:37/HERO RIC/ Texas Tom, you're not confused, you're just seeing the light. David Byrne says one thing and does another. He cashed in. There's really nothing more to say.

zen participation in democracy. Also in late summer, *Vanity Fair* magazine declared that rioting is now "out," and will not be in fashion this fall. The Index spirals into confusion.

· Perfect Buy Nothing Day Gift: The Invisible Jim doll. "Invisible Jim is nothing but packaging! But oh, what swell packaging it is!" A metaphor for the age, and only $3. The Index rises on a bubble of sheer gall.

· Perfect Buy Nothing Day Gift, Too: According to the London *Observer*, a recording of the minute of silence that followed the Princess of Wales' funeral will soon be available for purchase, putting a price on the genre of John Cage, Yoko Ono (at her best), and brooding wallflowers everywhere. The Index raises the alarm against the commercialization of noiselessness.

1 First you hit the Decompression Zone, the only wide-open space in the store. It takes the average customer at least 12 feet to slow down and find the groove of a shop's atmospherics. You've likely never noticed this, but then you've never used stop-motion video to study your behavior. "Retail anthropologists" at firms like Envirosell – offices in New York, Milan, and São Paulo – have. They know you. They know you the way Dian Fossey knows gorillas.

5 Consider: The progenitor of "theme retail" was Frank Baum, the author of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

3 Research shows, too, that you will look to the checkout counter for cues on how much to buy. Bringing a pair of socks to a huge counter is like bringing a bag of potato chips to a potluck in the Hamptons.

7 Here comes a salesperson. Chances are, she's received little training and is operating mostly out of fear of a sub-par performance. During hiring, she faced a better than 50 percent chance of drug testing and may have filled out a questionnaire "scientifically designed" to screen out liars. The likelihood she is under some kind of workplace surveillance is close to 75 percent. She almost certainly feels her employers are more powerful than they actually are.

8 On the other hand, the salesperson could be a shark, well trained in sales tactics and human behavior. Perhaps she approaches from your left, looking into your left eye – a subtle pressure on the emotional centers of the right brain. Cover your mouth and see if it changes her sales pitch. That's textbook body language for a person who doesn't believe what they're being told.

10 You're checking tags, looking at signs. You notice the shop's logo has been slightly updated (research shows that faith in a brand can plunge if the logo is dramatically changed). Colors, packaging, store layouts known as "planograms" – all have been exhaustively studied by groups like the Yaffe Center for Persuasive Communications, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. You can try to get a sense of objective truth about quality and value as you shop, but you are up against an expanding science of "illusion of truth."

13 Consider: There is an entire science, "aromacology," devoted to the effect of odor on behavior.

4 Most people go to the mall for something specific. The trick is to get them distracted. In the past, a dizzying layout was enough. Today, as Walt Disney said, "You've got to have a weenie at the end of every street" – attractions winking from every direction. The goal is Gruen Transfer, a disassociative state that primes you for impulse buying. The effect is named for Victor Gruen, a 1950s architect who imagined the modern mall as a replacement Main Street, only to see his vision co-opted by "fast-buck promoters and speculators."

12 Some forms of Muzak have proved to increase a department store shopper's number of purchases by as much as 17 percent. A store's "audio architecture" can be microtargeted, making you feel included – membership is available – or left out and wanting in. It can subtly increase your level of arousal, or dazzle with "marketainment." But you're not *really* hooked until you buy a store's signature CD to enjoy at home.

11 In a narrow aisle at the back, you finally find the discount rack. You won't be here for long. "Butt-brush" studies show that almost all women – and many men – will stop looking at an item the moment their back end is brushed by a passing shopper.

6 Mannequins. Just what is it that makes them so creepy? Blame evolution. In any landscape, the human eye tends to pick out human shapes first. Even – and maybe especially – when they don't have heads.

9 Do you have what it takes to be a prime target market? Here's a definition, from the manufacturers of cool who market Pommery's Pop champagne: "That restricted circle of enthusiasts who love the best things in life, the non-conformists, people who hate the ordinary and everyday things in life. . . . They are resolutely city-based and socialite, curious about everything, provided it is trendy. If they aren't homosexual, they certainly have friends who are."

2 Envirosell founder Paco Underhill is a pioneer in "the science of selling." Another of his laws is Invariant Right, or the near-certainty that, once your Decompression has been achieved by a Power Display of, say, cashmere sweaters, you will turn down a righthand aisle. And the wider that aisle, the slower you'll move.

14 Keep in mind that all of this is for your convenience and comfort. You're a free agent making informed decisions in a free market.

PHOTO: DAVE NIDDRIE

SOURCES: *COERCION*, BY DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF, 1999; *WHY WE BUY*, BY PACO UNDERHILL, 1999; *NICKEL AND DIMED*, BY BARBARA EHRENREICH, 2001; POMMERY/POP CHAMPAGNE MARKETING MATERIALS, SEPT. 2000; <YAFFECENTER.ORG>; <MUZAK.COM>; <JUSTDISNEY.COM>; WORKPLACE STATS FROM AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION + AMERICAN MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

PHOTO: JEFF HARRIS

Go Along To Get Along

Medical researchers dare not bite the hand that feeds the bitter pill

In September 2001, the world's top medical journals established a new policy designed to give medical researchers what the public thought they already had: the right to publish the findings of their studies. In fact, most medical research is funded at least in part by companies that stand to benefit from the results, and, to that effect, they require researchers to sign agreements stating that they will not publish any data without say so from corporate head office.

In 1999, Eli Lilly, the maker of Prozac, received the results of one such study, which looked at the drug Olanzapine – the best selling antipsychotic drug in the United States. Eli Lilly had hoped to show that their drug was useful for Parkinson's patients. And so, when the result came back negative, they did not alert doctors of their discovery. Rather, they put the data in a vault. The consequence, according to Joseph Friedman, a professor at Brown University Medical School, is that "the drug continues to be used inappropriately, harming unknown numbers of patients" (*Providence Journal*, March 9, 2001).

Cases such as this show the need for new policies governing the conduct and reporting of medical science. But will they be enough? Drug companies provide huge sums to universities in the US and Canada, and researchers know that negative results will put them at the end of the money train. As such, the move by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors to give greater rights to researchers seems more akin to PR than radical change. As long as research is funded by drug companies, such policies mean only that more pressure will be placed on making sure the results are positive ones.

David Healy would know. A research psychiatrist in North Wales, Healy found that a certain antidepressant can increase suicidal and homicidal behavior in some users. When he reported this in a talk at the University of Toronto, the university retracted its job offer. Not surprisingly, the institute receives millions of dollars in funding from, you guessed it, Eli Lilly.

Richard Degrandpre

Silence is complicity!
· Researchers led by Elizabeth Loftus of the University of Washington have shown that image advertising can create its own false-memory syndrome. Adults were shown a mock ad showing Disney World visitors shaking hands with Bugs Bunny – who is not a Disney character. Still, many of the adults later recalled shaking hands with Bugs during their own Disney visits. "This brings forth ethical considerations," said Loftus. "Is it OK for marketers to knowingly manipulate consumers' pasts?" To which the

EMPTINESS

Mad, Mad World

Big Pharma plans to end Third World suffering – with a pill

The World Health Organization is poised to push psychiatric drugs out of the First World and into every corner of the planet. But before that happens, the psychiatric industry needs to convince developing nations that their citizens are mentally ill.

The industry has had plenty of practice, for example with the well-documented ADHD fiasco. In 1970, less than one percent of North American children were on medications for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Today, thanks to broad diagnostic criteria combined with aggressive promotional work by psychiatric associations and pharmaceutical companies, there are regions in North America where nearly 20 percent of kids are being treated with stimulants.

Many other "epidemics" are outright fabrications or old diagnoses with brand new hype.

Last year, fears of "Sudden Wealth Syndrome" spread rapidly from the *Los Angeles Times* to the *New York Times*. This "disease" was actually concocted by two California psychologists claiming to cure newly rich people of "money-related ruminations" and anxiety about market indexes.

Similarly, *PR News* reported that media references to "social anxiety disorder" increased from 50 in 1998 to an astounding one billion in 1999, following promotions by Paxil manufacturer GlaxoSmithKline. The "fear of one or more social or performance situations" is now one of America's most commonly diagnosed mental illnesses.

Eli Lilly and Pfizer now claim their antidepressants, Prozac and Zoloft, also cure social anxiety disorder. Indeed, a glance through the promotional materials of all three companies turns up claims that these antidepressants alternately cure disorders characterized by sleeping too much or too little, eating too much or too little, feeling apprehensive or bored, and being obsessive or inattentive. Next, the same drugs are going to cure the world.

WHO director-general Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland has signalled a dramatic shift in the way global leaders interpret human misery. Acknowledging that psychological pain, stress and debilitation are increasing worldwide, Brundtland has looked away from the likely causes and solutions and instead redefined the problem: How do we get the suffering back into the workforce? Having consulted "with chief executives of the largest pharmaceutical corporations" and "the main purse-holders of this world," Brundtland is convinced that the tired, the poor and the huddled masses are in need of psychotropic drugs.

"Forget the fresh water, food, and clean air," remarks Dr. Tana Dineen, author of *Manufacturing Victims*, a critical study of the field of psychology. "It's tyrannical nurturance. Instead of Big Brother, it's Big Mother – the Caring Mother."

In October, the WHO will unveil a $75-billion, 15-year mental-health action plan with support from agencies like the World Bank, US Surgeon General, World Psychiatric Association and United Nations. But there's a growing counter-insurgency.

An ongoing class-action lawsuit surrounding ADHD charges Ritalin's manufacturers and the American Psychiatric Association with fraud. And in June, a Wyoming jury found the antidepressant Paxil largely to blame for a murder-suicide that left four dead; GlaxoSmithKline was ordered to pay $6.4 million in damages. The number of similar cases – accusing drug manufacturers of suppressing research that shows their antidepressants are addictive and can cause homicidal or suicidal outbursts – has been rising since the mid 1990s.

Meanwhile, in July, protesters gathered in Vancouver outside the World Assembly for Mental Health conference to "demonstrate resistance to the globalization of psychiatric human rights violations." The protest was organized by Support Coalition International, an alliance of 100 grassroots organizations from 13 countries fighting against forced psychiatric treatment and the pharmaceutical industry's social agenda.

"There are more mental health professionals than ever-challenging the mental health system," says SCI director David Oaks. "It's definitely a ray of hope." Still, he questions whether critics inside the pharmaculture industry will "get to the root problems."

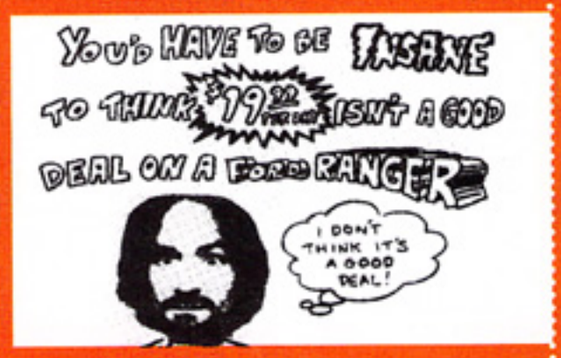
Dineen also wonders. "Focusing on the 'illnesses' prevents us from focusing on the kind of society we've created, and are perpetuating," she argues. "Which is a consumer society. And everybody's empty."

Rob Wipond

Index answers, In the good old days, didn't pigs fly?

· **M.E. Glossary:**

advergame (ad'ver gām) n. a video game with marketing messages built into the action to improve "stickiness," or the tendency to hold a person's attention while he or she is bombarded with ads, in the manner of early hominids hunting mastadon by chasing them into tar pits.*seeding program* (sēd'ing · prō'gram) n. a metaphor of alien-pod-people creepiness, used to describe marketing campaigns that involve giving away a product free of charge to individuals identified as "trendsetters."



From *Archives of General Psychiatry*, July 2001.

12 No really, have you? A full-blown panic attack?[13]

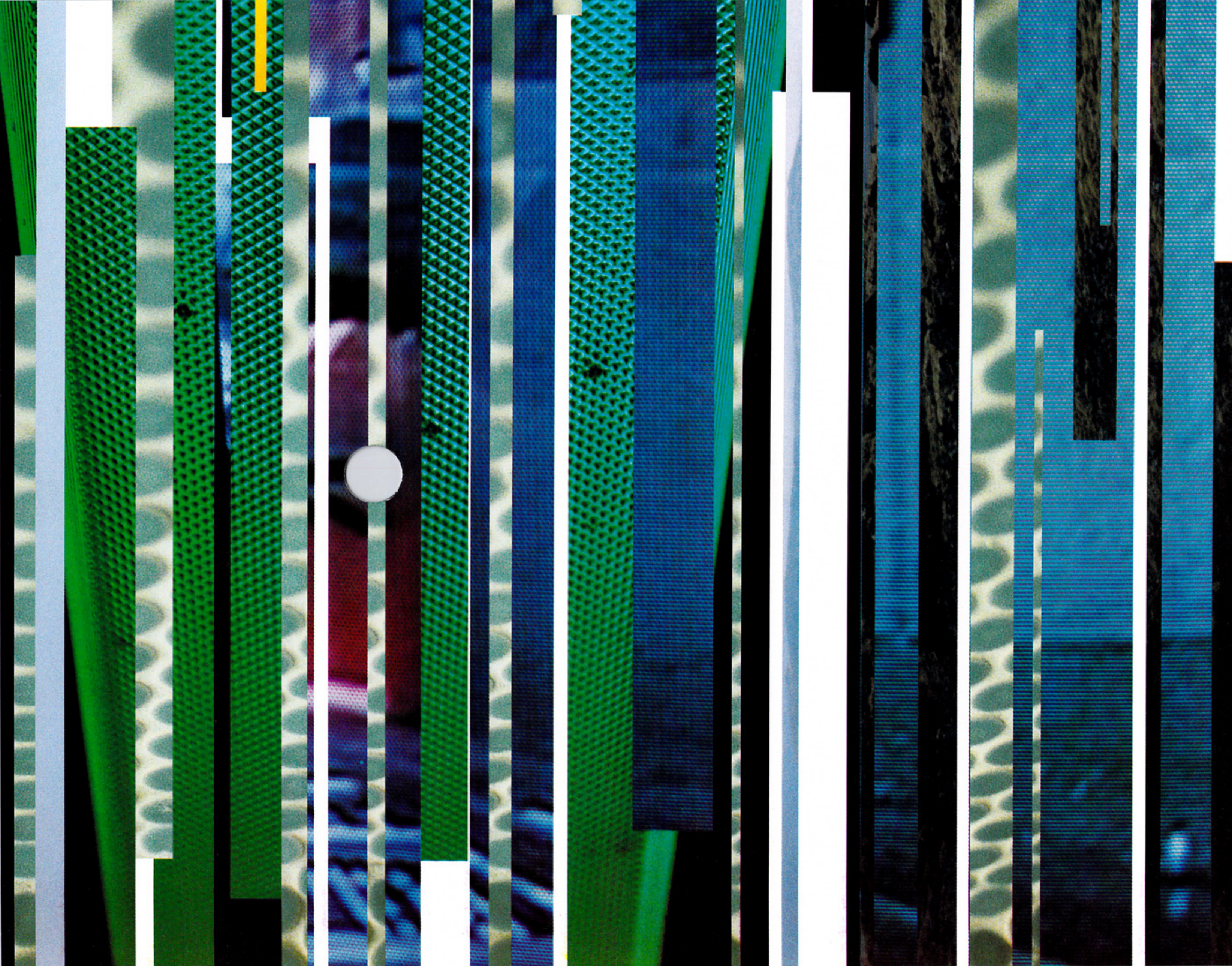
13 It feels like you're dying of asthma. The next day you go to the doctor and blow into a balloon and no, you do not have asthma. So the next attack is a hole in your heart. You are dying of a congenital weakness of the heart that has just given out, like a bubblegum bubble. The emergency doctor says that's not the case. So the next time you know it's not asthma, it's not a hole in your heart, so it must be a bloodclot, or a catastrophic allergy, or ebola. Oh my god it's ebola. The blood is pooling in your lungs and you are dying of ebola.

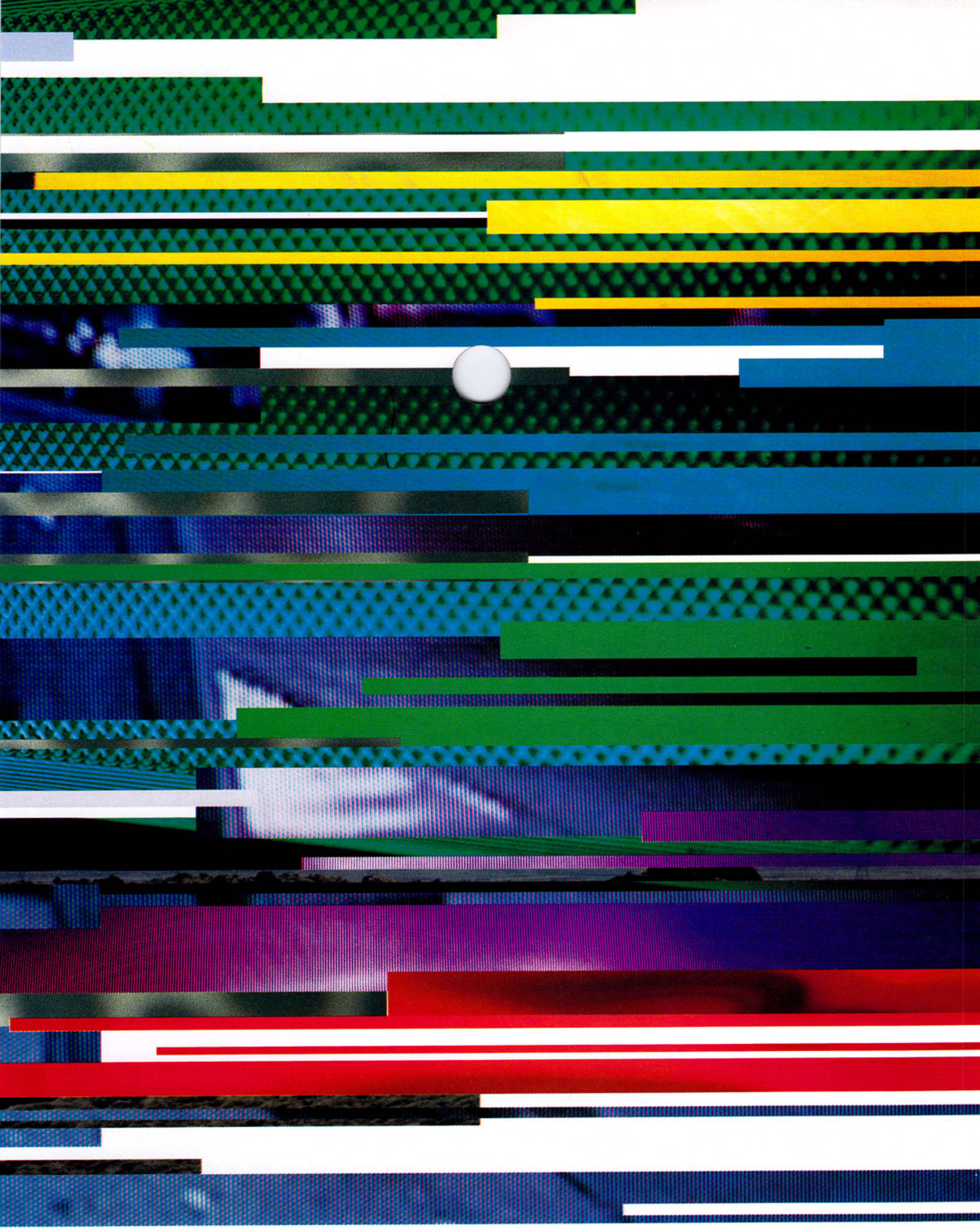
But this time I'm not dying. The panic this time is that I'm *falling behind*. I'm just a little bit too old and my haircut is a month late, and no one is wearing square-toe shoes this season or following the X Games or going to Burning Man and I haven't made the shift from sunblock to bronzing cream and none of my close friends are gay and I have never used a BlackBerry and am not aware of the understated genius of Edward Yang and people are sneering at my choice of Coca-Cola.

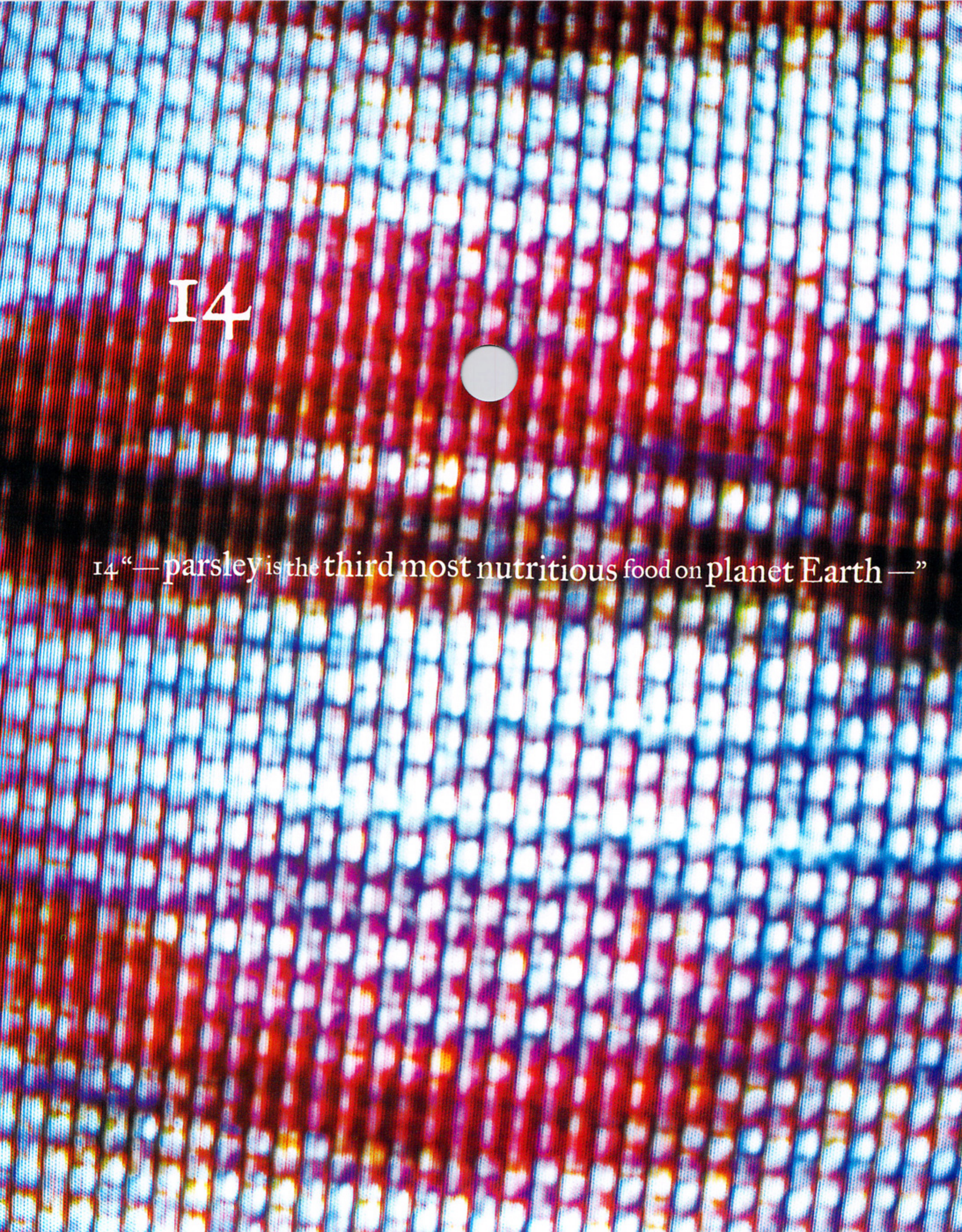
Ibiza is a kind of appetizer.

Dave Eggers is the guy who runs Burger King.

Chinaco Añejo is a world-beat musician —







14

14 "— parsley is the third most nutritious food on planet Earth —"

15

15 "— you've been looking for that Fountain of Youth in a jar and it's actually going to come in a mask —"

16

16 "— We're trapped on a desert island. We're horny —"

17

17 "— We've all been harassed by the police! We've all been spied on by J. Edgar Hoover —"

18

18 "— what fun is it being cool if you can't wear a sombrero? —"

19

19 " — I saw the best of my generation playing pinball, maked up and caked up and — — and always moving upward and ever upward to this gentle golden promised land —"

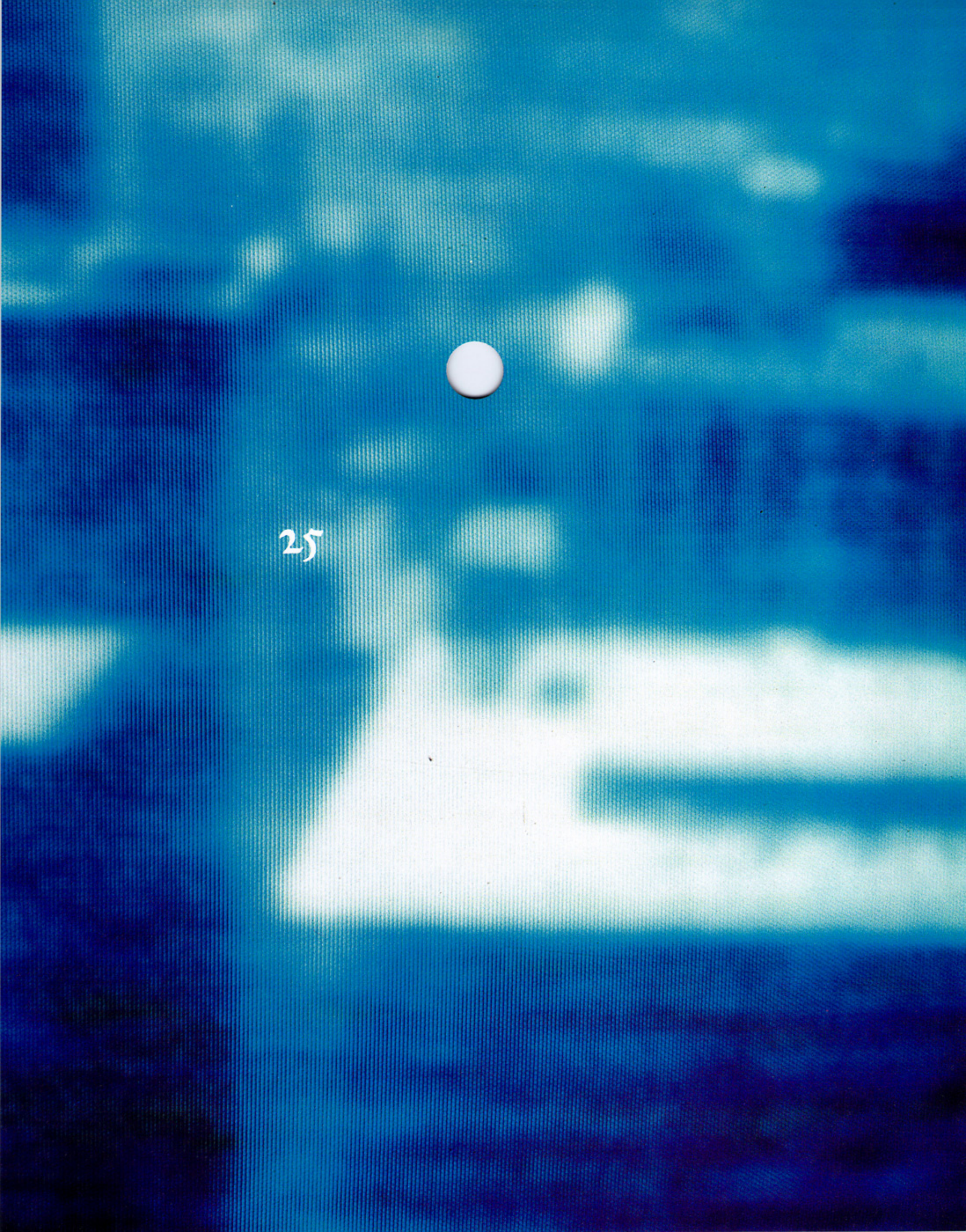
20

20 "— Look at all the people out there. They're smarter than you and they're not even rich —"

21

21 So that is when I turned on to Iceland. That is when I decided to lose myself to a good armchair and Iceland.

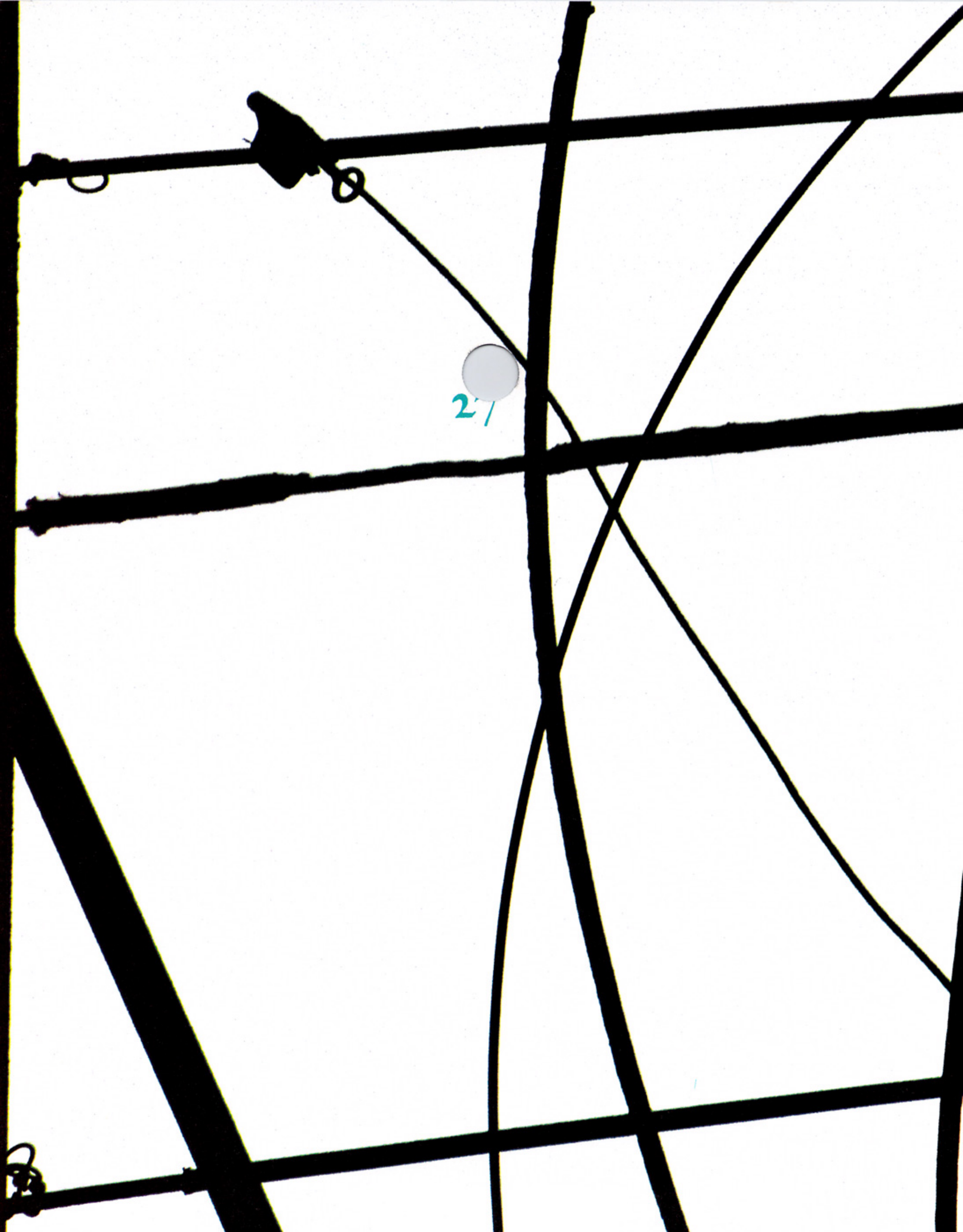
25 The sun's coming up. Another day.


25

26

26 On the radio, they're warning people with asthma to stay indoors. The sky is a dingy ochre mushroom. Just look at it. Just look at that yellow sky. Strange that we have to be told to see the smog.

PHOTOS: DAVE NIDDRIE



27 I'm staying in. Me and the asthmatics. I'm not ready to get back out there, not yet. I need another day in Iceland— the lava desert and the black sand beach, the wind turning back the waterfall. I'll start the video exactly where I left off, with the razorbills doing flybys along the nesting cliffs at Svörtuloft. Unbelievable stuff. I must have watched that part twenty times. Maybe fifty.*

*By James MacKinnon

YOU'VE SEEN THE WORLD OF DEPRESSION...*

*NOW SEE THE DIFFERENCE THAT GEODAM™ CAN MAKE.

Based on an ad for New Geodon/Ziprasidone HC1, in *Archives of Nursing Psychiatry*, June 2001

What's My Damage

?

1. Carbon dioxide in small quantities isn't dangerous, just as Ronald McDonald can't do the same damage as, say, Joseph Goebbels.

BY BILL MCKIBBEN

A Volume Problem

For the natural world, it took a silent spring. What will launch a movement for the mental environment?

Your mind, a clear mountain stream running burbling through the rocks. Pepsi stands up, unzips its billion-dollar ad budget, and takes a leak, staining it forever brown. Your brain, a verdant old-growth forest, until it dies the death of a thousand swooshes. Your soul, filled with the crystal fresh air of early morning, until Philip Morris blows in a cloud of its seductive smoke.

_No. Mental environmentalism may be the most important notion of this new century, but the only way to start this discussion is by admitting the analogy is not exact. Whatever the mental environment is, it's not a pristine wilderness untrammeled by man. It's not the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, or the Antarctic Biosphere Reserve. No, the mental environment has been shaped by culture as long as we've been, well, human.

_The mind is, among other things, a tool for collecting, storing, weighing images and ideas. Perhaps earlier in our primate evolution our brains worked differently, but for millions of years we have been shaping our own minds and the minds of those around us. Our mental environment is not the Yosemite of John Muir or Ansel Adams — it has always been more like Central Park, a landscaped reflection of human notions. Every generation, every community, has had a mental environment. The culture. The zeitgeist. It is that almost invisible fog of assumptions in which we live our lives, the set of images and ideas we barely notice because they are so common as to be both banal and overwhelming.

_What's more, this is not the first moment that our mental environment has been polluted. We've seen all kinds of toxins poured into the infostream. Check out a Leni Riefenstahl movie if you want to see what I mean. Try to imagine life during Mao's Cultural Revolution. The state, the church, have time and again become mentally oppressive, until eventually a resistance emerged — a resistance that, from Martin Luther to Vaclav Havel, said at least in part: "We want our minds back." Not all the way back — we've never owned our minds entirely. But more of our minds, in better shape.

_Which brings us to the present moment, the moment that we have to deal with, the moment out of which we have to stage our singular resistance. The mental environment is under siege from a particularly

difficult variety of pollution. To understand it, consider an analogy from the physical world, where carbon dioxide is threatening to warm the planet disastrously. Taken in small doses, carbon dioxide is not dangerous, just as the occasional commercial or billboard is hardly a problem. In fact, CO2 in small quantities isn't anywhere near as dangerous as most chemicals, just as Ronald McDonald couldn't do the same kind of damage as, say, Joseph Goebbels. But every act of a modern life releases carbon into the atmosphere. Spewed from the rear ends of a billion cars and factories and furnaces, this constant pollution now seems likely to raise global temperatures five degrees in this century, altering everything from rainfall to ice-melt to wind speed. Similarly, the modern consumer economy sends up an almost infinite blitz of information and enticement, till the air is so thick with it that every feature of our society is changed. In neither case is it pollution in the usual sense, easily cleaned with a smokestack filter or combated with a more wholesome image. Instead, it's a volume problem. In the case of the so-called information society, it may be the largest psychological experiment in history.

_Here's another way of saying it: We are the first few generations to receive most of our sense of the world mediated rather than direct, to have it arrive through one screen or another instead of from contact with other human beings or with nature.

_So far, in one sense, this experiment is working. That is, people manage to consume more stuff with each passing year, keeping the economy expanding. And since nations have taken that expansion as their sole goal ("It's the economy, stupid"), we count this as a success. In fact, we now spread this experiment around the world, by persuasion (Chiat Day), and by force (the IMF). And yet, by most other measures, cracks are appearing. Just as the physical world is sending warning signals about rising temperatures (disappearing glaciers, more powerful storms, changing migration patterns), so the culture is sending ever-louder signals about the side-effects of this experiment.

For instance:

>> Americans now have a negative savings rate, which is to say our consumption now outstrips our actual income. According to the US Federal Reserve, the tradition of keeping up with the Joneses has left us with a $7.3-trillion debt owing to credit card companies, banks, and other loan sharks.

>> Our physicians warn us of a coming consumer epidemic. The Centers for Disease Control found that obesity in the population increased from 12 percent in 1991 to 17.9 percent in 1998, and earlier this year, the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine reported that the number of overweight children has more than doubled in a single generation. Research consistently links these fatter kids to hours spent staring at various tubes.

>> One survey after another shows the bonds of community loosening. The numbers of people volunteering, spending time with neighbors, going to church, attending public meetings or joining clubs — all are down, and many are plummeting. Since at least 1999, studies have shown that the average American child spends 40 hours a week "consuming media." It's a full-time job.

_But if you want a bottom line, perhaps it can be found in the annual surveys of "personal satisfaction" that pollsters have been conducting for several generations. The number of people pronouncing themselves as "very satisfied" with their lives peaked in the mid-1950s. It slid downhill after that, even as we grew immensely richer, even as our "choices" expanded exponentially.

So there's something toxic in this new info-air we breathe. But we need a subtler diagnosis than that. In the physical world each toxin works differently, after all — chlorofluorocarbons scavenge ozone, sulfur acidifies rain, organochlorines cause mutation. Something the same must apply to the mental environment, and so researchers have tried to parse the messages that caress and jolt us daily. Is it the violence? The blunting of our emotions by endless shock? The unending hype? All of those, surely — but something else even more.

_If the mental environment we live in has a single distinctive feature, the way that oxygen defines our atmosphere , it is self-absorption. That's what a mental environment gone awry has produced; that is the toxic outcome of our era's unique pollution. Some years ago, working on a book, I watched every word and image that came across the largest cable system in the world in a 24-hour period — more than 2,000 hours of ads and infomercials, music videos and sitcoms. If you boiled this stew down to its basic ingredient, this is what you found, repeated ad infinitum: You are the most important thing on earth, the heaviest object in the universe. From the fawning flattery of the programming to the mind-messing nastiness of the commercials, it continually posited a world of extreme individualism. Even more than, say, violence, that's the message that flows out the coaxial cable. Characters on television may turn violent to get what they want now, but it's the what-they-want-now that lies nearer the heart of the problem.

2. Television characters may turn violent to get what they want now, but it's the get-what-they-want-now

_This hyper-individualism is a relatively new phenomenon in our lives. For most of human history, people have put something else near the center — the tribe, the gods, the natural world. But a consumer society can't tolerate that, because having something else at the center complicates consumption. Say you really cared about the natural world

— there's no way you'd buy an Explorer or a Navigator or a Blazer. Say community was the most important thing on earth to you — you might be tempted to share your tools or your toys. Say, on this Christian continent, people actually put the Gospel message somewhere near the center of their lives. The economy as we know it simply could not survive, any more than it could survive in a truly Confucian China, a Buddhist Japan.

_This appeal to us as individual fragments grows ever more powerful and precise. Most of the new technologies premise their appeal (especially to advertisers) on their ability to target with frightening accuracy our locations and our psyches. In a 1997 piece on "push media," those ever-foaming evangels at Wired magazine predicted that before too long your Personal Digital Assistants and cell phones and their spawn would be firing you messages wherever you were, providing information about things to buy, entertainments to enjoy. And why would we want this? "Relief from boredom. Push media will penetrate environments that have, in the past, been media-free — work, school, church, the solitude of a country walk. Through cheap wireless technologies, push media are already colonizing the world's last quiet nooks and crannies."

_To judge by the number of people with cell phones welded to their ears, styluses gripped in their fingers, the soothsayers at Wired were more or less right. The empowered human being! Ever more independent! Free even of the need to ask directions or look up at the stars.

that's at the heart of the problem

_And then what? As the colonization expands, what frontiers remain? So far, the assaults on our mental environment have been mainly from the outside, but we are seeing sorties to the inside, too. Already we see psychopharmacology rampant, the ranks of people who need such medicine swelled by a creeping malaise, but also by a gradual redefinition of our foibles, of our tiny personal tragedies. There are pills for the camera-shy, for "shopper's remorse," for the stresses of personal bankruptcy — it's getting crowded in the collective bummer tent. Before long, genetic engineers may well be able to literally tweak the brains of our children, offering them "extra intelligence" or perhaps docility, upgraded memory at the price of downgraded meaning. Improved individuals, at the price of whatever individuality should mean in its sweetest sense.

_But. The human mind and heart are not dead yet; indeed there are signs that we've reached the moment of resistance, that a million Vaclav Havels, albeit often tongue-tied and unsure precisely their mission, are rising from different corners to challenge this assault. If you ask me what I remember from the WTO battle in Seattle, it is not the sting of rubber bullets nor the choke of gas; it is a jaunty balloon rising above the melee with this message painted on its side: "Wake Up Muggles." If you've read Harry Potter, then you know: Muggles are all of us, living in a world of magic but unable to see it, focused as we are on television and mall. But we are waking, in sufficient numbers to insure that there will be the same kind of fight for the mental environment as there has been for the physical one. And, of course, the fights will overlap.

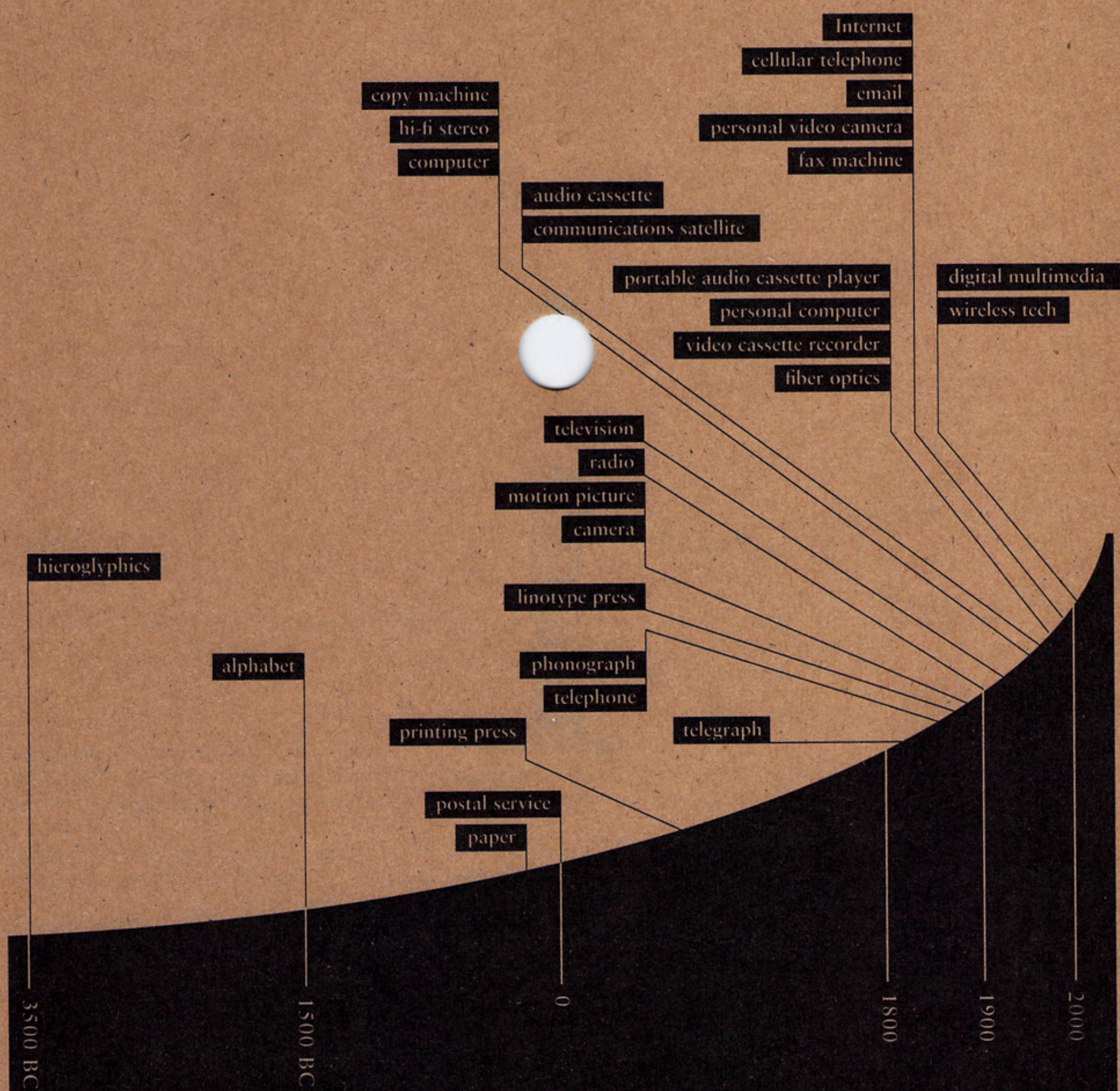
_People are turning off their televisions — that explains some of the desperation of advertisers for "new media." And sure, Madison Avenue is capturing some of those eyeballs on the Internet. Maybe they're capturing most of them. But other folks are using that technology as a bridge to the real world, a way to reconnect to human beings and to the reality that lies beyond the electronic mammary. To nudge themselves from the center of the world and to consider other possibilities. We organized a big anti-SUV protest in Boston this spring, but it took a suburban minister to show up with a truly subversive sign: "What Would Jesus Drive?" There's an idea that even Detroit may have a little trouble co-opting.

3. Time and time again throughout history, a resistance has emerged that said: 'We want our minds back. Not all the way back — but more of our minds, in better shape.'

_Mental environmentalists may well lose, just like their colleagues working in the physical world — global warming may be too much to overcome, and so may push media or genetic engineering or the simple warm-bath skill of those designers and marketers who would sap our lives for their own advancement. But the fight itself holds tremendous possibility. The liberation from self-absorption comes most of all in the battle to help others and in the vision of a world that makes sense to our minds, a world where no single idea ("buy") holds sway.

_Forget monoculture, in our fields or in our heads; imagine instead a thousand different communities, adapted to the physical places they inhabit, sharing insight and difference, appreciating small scale and large heart. Where no musician sells 10 million copies, but 10 million musicians sing each night. Where we are freed from consumer identity and idolatry to be much more ourselves. Where we have our heads back.

Bill McKibben is the author of *The End of Nature*, *The Age of Missing Information* and other books about the environment, the media and our ways of life. He is currently a visiting scholar at Middlebury College.



For tens of thousands of years, technology has been drawing humanity toward an epic convergence. The big question is, will this vast information processing system we are building liberate or shackle us? Will people or corporations be in control? Will cultural diversity flourish or die? Will humankind be dumbed down or find new meaning? Will we huddle in ignorance, overwhelmed, or will a new self, a new culture, a new consciousness be pushed into being?

BY JONATHAN ROWE

Carpe Callosum

(seize the brain)

Welcome to the new New Economy — where the currency is mindshare, the bottom line is need, and the index is always rising

A LITTLE MINDSHARE IN MAZATLAN

I turn on my computer and prepare to enter the Information Age. But information isn't what I see. My start page is top-loaded with commercial come-ons. Ads commandeer my screen without warning; I have to swat them away like flies. Even search engines — the prototypical "information tools" — turn out to be payola stations. Sponsors bribe their way to the top of every list.

In other words, this New Economy feels an awful lot like the old one. Economists and journalists may sing rhapsodies to information, but what's happening on-screen is pretty much what's happening in the rest of our lives. "The new economy is not an information or a knowledge economy," observed a writer for South Africa's *Financial Mail*. "It is an attention economy."

The basic resource of this new economy is not something they provide us. It's something we provide them — "mindshare," in the charming idiom of the trade. Now ask yourself this: What if there's only so much mind to share? If you've wondered how people could feel so depleted in such a prosperous economy, how stress could become the trademark affliction of the age, part of the answer might be here.

NOTHING TO LOSE BUT OUR FLOSS-O-MATICS

If Karl Marx were writing today he probably would want to make some revisions, and one might be the idea of the proletariat. Marx had them working on the production side of the economy, toiling with hands and minds to supply the world's material needs.

Today, it's a whole new game. If there is a proletariat in the developed world, it is equally on the *consumption* side of the economy.

The economy doesn't really need our making; what it needs from us is our *buying*. In the apt phrase of community development advocate John McKnight, we are a society "in need of need," and the entire economy has rearranged itself to this end — as a factory of need.

The credit system, for example, once financed production. Now it is synonymous with the maxed-out Visa or MasterCard. Occupational illness today includes obesity, stress, childhood diabetes, diminished attention spans and other afflictions that beset consumers on the job. Child labor has been redefined as well. Once they sent kids off to factories and mills. Now we sit them in front of televisions for hours, and send them to school where they are compelled to watch video ads in the classroom. It's not just child labor. It's indentured servitude as well.

The concept of a tool also has changed. Tools once were for making, but increasingly they are for consuming. The computer is the

prime example, fulfilling the adman's dream of reducing the gap between the impulse and the purchase practically to zero. More important still is the way the computer captures mindshare. It is the Northwest Passage for the attention economy, the portal through which it enters realms not accessible before. Consider: Web shopping peaks during the workday and drops off on weekends. Through the power of the Internet, the workplace has become a shopping place.

Technology is not neutral. It evolves in the image of the agendas that create it, and the tools of the attention economy are not exceptions. They represent the latest phase of a process that has been going on for centuries — the attempt to render all of life as something that can be bought and sold.

'THIS SPACE FOR RENT' IS AN IDEOLOGY

The process started with common lands in Tudor England. Before that time, ordinary people had rights to land they didn't own — to farm, forage, hunt and the like. But gradually the larger land owners managed to "enclose" these lands, stripping commoners of their traditional rights and forcing them into cities to sell their labor.

Karl Polyani, the historian, called these enclosures "a revolution of the rich against the poor."

Fast forward down the centuries. Industry is booming. The world has never seen so much stuff. But now a new problem looms: Who's going to buy it all? For eons the economic problem had been a scarcity of things. Now it is a scarcity of need for things.

The answer was more enclosure. Time was reconfigured to the metronome of consumption. Holidays became shopping days, and new holidays were invented, such as Mother's Day, to provide occasions for obligatory buying.

Space was altered even more. First came the suburb and then the mall, which enclosed the civic commons of Main Street and stripped shopping of a larger communal context. The first enclosures forced people off the land and into factories. These later ones channeled people back into a privatized version of the land, where they would buy the stuff the factories produced.

But there was still a glitch. *Cognitive space* existed outside the mall. People might still, on occasion, be mentally occupied with something other than needing and buying. Thus began the ultimate enclosure — the enclosure of the cognitive commons, the ambient mental atmosphere of daily life.

Radio and television made the first inroads, together capturing more than a quarter of the typical American's waking hours. (By 1998, Juliet Schor could report in her book *The Overspent American* that Americans spend an extra $208 for every hour of television they watch.) Step by step, ads crept into every nook and cranny of conscious experience until they conquered and subsumed it. It was not enough that a stadium contain ads. The stadium itself had to become an ad, as when Boston's hallowed Garden became the bank-sponsored FleetCenter. It was not enough that the ad sponsor the show. It had to become the show, through placement of products within the script.

Just when you think they've claimed every inch, they find a few more. In September, Fay Weldon, a British writer, released a novel that had been sponsored by the Bulgari jewelry company. Bulgari had insisted on at least a dozen mentions of its products; Weldon included more than three times that many.

"The door is open and now the sky is the limit," her agent Giles Gordon told *The Guardian* newspaper. "I've suggested that in her next book she include a whole string of top companies: Disney, Levi's, McDonald's, the lot."

LOVE IT OR, WELL, LOVE IT

The enclosure of the cognitive commons has become so pervasive that we often don't even notice. It is the air we breathe, the mental environment in which we live and move and have our beings. It is not just experience, but also the lens through which we process experience.

The news today, for example, is an extension of the master script, a confirming echo of cognitive enclosure. The corporate media portray the health of the economy in terms of consumption and buying — that is, the GDP and "growth." They portray progress almost always in terms of something new to buy — a new computer or pill — and offer breathless reportage when such a thing appears.

Those who question are excluded from the script. Skeptics can't even buy their way onto the screen with paid ads (as this magazine was among the first to discover). In the former Soviet Union you couldn't say anything against the government; in America you can't upset the sponsor.

To which the defender of enclosure says, "If you don't like it, don't pay attention." But that's the problem. Through enclosure of the cognitive commons, we often don't have a choice. Suppose we actually could avoid the ad wraps on buses, the televisions in restaurants, the university professorships sponsored by Disney, the public spaces named after automotive companies. Even then, the endless enclosure would be impossible to ignore. We would find its imprint in everything from the priorities of our governments to the wants of our children.

The logic of cognitive enclosure inevitably leads to compulsion. When ads appeared in newspapers and magazines we could choose not to read them. Television and radio locked us into a temporal stream, but still we could turn them off. Put the television somewhere that we have to be, such as a waiting room or transit vehicle, remove the off button and volume control, *et voilà*, the logic is complete.

For kids the assault is especially intense. Even if parents toss out the television, the principal of their children's school can still agree to make the kids watch ads on Channel One every day. In effect, the principal has sold the kids' attention — the entryway of their identity and being — to corporations for money. What does that say about the relationship between government and governed? Between corporations and our kids?

The market value of our attention depends upon the extent of its captivity. The less choice we have, the more mindshare the advertiser gets. Which means it's time to ask some basic questions. To whom does our attention belong in the first place? And who owns the space through which the enclosers seek to capture it?

The advertiser might own the billboard. But the space between the billboard and ourselves belongs to us. It's a commons, and one possible response to a coercive attention economy lies in this fact. Nike wouldn't let us trespass on its property. Why should it get to use our common property without restriction?

THERE IS AN EXIT STRATEGY

_Economists contend that a commons is inherently "tragic" and subject to overuse. That's a canard. A commons simply needs rules of access and use, just as private property does.

The standard solution — privatization — is almost comically inapt where the cognitive commons is concerned. Privatization is what's happening now. The answer rather is to define and assert our rights to our common property, and restrict trespasses that interfere with our enjoyment and use.

This is hardly a radical new idea. There's a long history of limits on commercial trespass upon common and private property. In the 1960s, the US Congress enacted a ban — more or less — on billboards on interstate highways. Vermont bans billboards in the entire state. There is a federal law restricting junk faxes. At the moment, web advertisers are trying to stop a company called Gator.com that pastes its web ads atop those of others. "It's trespassing," huffed the president of the Interactive Advertising Bureau.

Fine. So why can't we, the bombardees, stop the ads that are trespassing upon our peace?

The most obvious need is to ban coercive ad assaults in public spaces and conveyances, such as schools, trains, stadiums, airport waiting lounges and the like.

Second, there should be a commons usage fee for commercial use of public places, including the public airwaves. Such rents — a kind of parking fee for advertisers — could help to finance noncommercial alternatives, such as public and community broadcasting. Also there should be space for views outside the ideology of consumption. It is a strange form of free speech that permits only speech that is paid for.

Third, there needs to be more disclosure regarding assaults on our attention. Movie listings, for example, should show the actual start time of the movie, not the time the ads begin. Home video boxes should disclose how many minutes of ads precede the film, and there should be disclosure of product placements, too.

Our friends the economists are not likely to be enthused. They regard the people they call "consumers" — that is, you and me — as an unlimited resource in their peculiar economic script. Supposedly we have an infinite capacity to absorb the stuff the economy needs us to consume, with associated pathologies and waste. (They once thought the same about the natural environment, of course.)

This belief is catechism; it must be so or else the script falls apart. A couple years ago, Lester Thurow, the noted MIT economist, actually suggested in a talk to US Senate Democrats that consumers could be "re-engineered" to dispose them to consume more. People exist to serve the economic model, in other words, not vice versa. At that instant, I had a sudden sinking feeling about the future of genetic engineering and the culture of pharmacology.

MULTITASKING AS FAST AS WE CAN

_Economists and corporate partisans have reason to be concerned. For decades there has been debate over the limits to economic growth in the material environment. Now another set of limits is appearing: the limits of our capacity to fulfill our assigned roles as consumers —

psychologically as well as physically.

The attention economy mines us much the way the industrial economy mines the earth. It mines us first for incapacities and wants. Our capacity for interaction and reflection must become a need for entertainment. Our capacity to deal with life's bumps and jolts becomes a need for "grief counseling" or Prozac. The progress of the consumer economy has come to mean the diminution of ourselves.

Then, the economy mines our attention to bestir those wants. Is it entirely coincidental that stress has become epidemic as the cognitive commons has filled and the demands on our attention have mounted? Is it coincidental that lapses of attention fill the news as well? At least 54 kids have died in cars this year after a parent left them unattended in severe heat. The government doesn't keep statistics on such deaths, but Janette Fenell, director of an organization called Kids 'N Cars in San Francisco, has scoured existing data bases for reports. "My sense is it's very much on the rise," she says. Parents "are often just leading lives that are much too harried."

Of the things that harry us today, the demands of the economy rank high. Recent research on multitasking shows what most of us probably suspected: that capacity diminishes as the mind has more things to process. So what happens when it processes — if only to dismiss — thousands of commercial messages a day, along with everything else?

Is it not a little chilling that, as advertisers clamor for the attention of our kids, the kids start to suffer from a "deficit" of that very thing? In typical manner, the economy locates the problem in the kids. It coins a new disease, "Attention Deficit Disorder," and prescribes yet more consumption — a daily dose of Ritalin to at least 4 million children in the US alone.

But could it be that the problem is more in the attention economy? Does it mine our kids to exhaustion, much as it mined the child laborers of the 19th century, though in a different way?

Back in the 1950s, when the attention economy was in its infancy, the US Supreme Court upheld the right of the bus system in Washington, DC, to subject riders to compulsory consumption of advertising via an on-bus radio system. Justice William O. Douglas filed an eloquent — and prescient — dissent. **"The right to be let alone is indeed the beginning of all freedom," Douglas wrote. "When we force people to listen to another's ideas, we give the propagandist a powerful tool."**

The battle for the cognitive commons will be this nation's next freedom movement. If we have no choice regarding what fills our attention, then we really have no choice at all.

JONATHAN ROWE

is a fellow at the Tomales Bay Institute in California and a contributing editor at the *Washington Monthly* and *Yes!* magazine.

SOCRATES (CIRCA 400 BC)

"Men of Athens, I shall obey the God rather than you. While I have life and strength I shall never cease to follow philosophy and to exhort and persuade any one of you whom I happen to meet."

Magna Carta

EARLY CHRISTIANS (CIRCA AD 70)

"Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? And, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine."

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."

JOHN MILTON, *AREOPAGITICA* (1644)

Prisoners' Rights

"This I know, that errors in a good government and in a bad are equally almost incident. If liberty of Printing be reduc't into the power of a few."

FRENCH DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND OF THE CITIZEN (1789)

"The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law."

Abolition of Slavery

FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE US CONSTITUTION (1791)

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Universal Suffrage

JOHN STUART MILL, *ON LIBERTY* (1859)

"There is always hope when people are forced to listen to both sides; it is when they attend only to one that errors harden into prejudices, and truth itself ceases to have the effect of truth, by being exaggerated into falsehood."

Right to Strike

Women's Rights

Children's Rights

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, ARTICLE 19 (1948)

Civil Rights

Racial Rights

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Rights of Sexual Orientation

Disabled Persons' Rights

Animal Rights

MEDIA CARTA: A NEW HUMAN RIGHT FOR OUR INFORMATION AGE – THE RIGHT TO COMMUNICATE, UNDER WHICH THE COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA MUST BE REGARDED AS A PUBLIC TRUST.

Rights of Common Culture

Environmental Rights

PSYCHO

Dada

Lettrism

Situationist Internationale

Guy Debord
"...an accum
Society of Sp
(1967)

Graffiti

Brave New World,
Aldous Huxley
(1931)

Marshall McLuhan
"...the medium is
the message,"
Understanding Media
(1964)

Alternative Media

Second Wave Feminism

Religion Anarchism Grassroots Populism

Yippies

Conservationism

Rachel Carson
"...nature is no
longer allowed
to happen,"
Silent Spring
(1962)

The Short History of a Mindscape

A few random datapoints, a handful of rogue voices in the wilderness. Like its cousin, environmentalism, it began as a notion and built as a pattern of criticism. A coherent message emerged, and finally, a movement. Below are some of the key events, philosophies and landmark books that paved the way.

ECO

Mad Movement

Mood Disorder Research

Parents Against Ritalin

FREE SOFTWARE MANIFESTO

NIX OPEN SOFTWARE

On Killing,
Richard Grossman
(1995)

Open Source Movement

ation of spectacles,"
tacle

Media Addiction Research

Information Freedom

Information Privacy

"CULTURE JAMMING"
–NEGATIVLAND (1984)

Cees Hamelink
"...right to communicate," *The Politics of World Communication* (1994)

Media Literacy Movement

TV TURNOFF WEEK

Manufacturing Consent,
Noam Chomsky and
Edward Hermann, (1988)

Robert McChesney
"...media have become an antidemocratic force," *Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy* (1997)

erry Mander
"...television is
ot reformable,"
our Arguments
or the
limination of
elevision
1977)

Media Democracy

Cultural Environment Movement

The Beauty Myth,
Naomi Wolf (1991)

DEMARKETING
SUBVERTISING
BILLBOARD LIBERATION
FASHION ACTIVISM

Uncommercial Schools

Pirate Radio

Adbusters, 1989-

Culture Jamming,
Mark Dery (1993)

Theodore Roszak
"...restore the Earth, heal the mind," *Ecopsychology* (1995)

Subcommandante Marcos "...low-intensity warfare," Zapatista Liberation Army

Punk D.I.Y.

Commodify Your Dissent,
Tom Frank (editor)
(1997)

DOWNSHIFTING

Noise Pollution Activists

Communitarianism

Voluntary Simplicity,
Duane Elgin (1993)

Light Pollution Activists

BUY NOTHING DAY

SLOW CITIES MANIFESTO

Reclaim the Streets

Rebels Against the Future,
Kirkpatrick Sale
(1996)

Deep Ecology

Neo-Luddites

PSYCHO

Psychologists Against Ads That Target Children

Resistance to Export of Western Pharmaculture

EPIDEMIC DEPRESSION

FREENET

Hacktivism

Cyborg Alert

Indymedia

Ad Creep Resistance

MEDIA CARTA

Brand Backlash

First Things First 2000

Culture Jam, Kalle Lasn (1999)

Design Resistance

No Logo, Naomi Klein (2000)

Anti-Globalization Movement

Global Grassroots

Mental Environmentalism

ENCLOSURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Bowling Alone, Robert Putnam (2000)

Cultural Creatives, Paul H. Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson (2000)

Shadow Society

ECO

THE BIRTH OF A MOVEMENT

The mental-environmental movement began, for me, two Novembers ago during the Battle in Seattle. I asked a young man why he was protesting. "Because I have to," he said. "If I didn't I couldn't live with myself. I'm not a very happy person. I used to think it was a personal thing, but now I'm coming to realize it's a cultural problem. I feel like all my life I've been psychologically abused – mindfucked, and now it's payback time."

Movements are born because a deep-down rage builds up inside a few people, and that rage, when it is expressed, ignites the simmering, unacknowledged rage of a whole nation. The big question we're asking in this issue of *Adbusters* is whether the rage so many of us feel is widely shared. Have enough of us have been pushed to the breaking point?

The environmental movement gelled in the summer of 1989 as a flurry of shocking news items appeared day after day: seals dying mysteriously in the North Sea; acid rain devastating the mythical Black Forest; hypodermic needles washing up on New York beaches; people suffering from a fatigue syndrome that no doctor was able to diagnose.

Now we have evidence of a mental environment no less in crisis: 20 million North Americans diagnosed with clinical depression; another 20 million suffering anxiety disorders; antidepressants now a $10-billion-a-year business; commercial messages everywhere the eye can rest – from the banana in the supermarket to the booster-rockets of the space shuttle, to product placement in the movie you're watching to escape it all. The number of megacorporate gatekeepers of most of the world's information stands at six – and falling.

In 1989, we realized that our natural environment was dying. That was pretty good incentive to march.

Today, we are realizing that our mental environment is dying too and we're getting ready to march again with a new vision: the vision of a wave of antitrust suits against the media megacorps, a new science of mental ecology, a new way of managing the production of meaning in our society.

Synchronize your watches, folks. And remember this day. >>>

PHOTOS COURTESY WWW.COMMERCIALFREE.ORG

***Neil Postman** is chair of the Department of Culture and Communication at New York University. The author of* Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business *and* The End of Education: Redefining the Value of Schools, *Postman defines a mental environment baseline.*

"The big issue we need to face is information glut. We are in a situation where there is so much information available from so many different sources – not just television – that we have a problem.

Schools are still acting as if they need to provide people with information, which the schools were pretty good at when there was information scarcity. When you have information overload, then the schools have something entirely different to do.

The problem is, if you are overwhelmed by information, you lose your sense of what information is for, and what sort of information you need. For example, there have been studies that show most people can't remember the television news from the previous day. About the only thing on television that seems to be relevant, as far as most people are concerned, is the weather – because that at least gives people a sense of something they can do as a result of getting some information.

There was a time when input was in fact related to output. When you took in information, you were able to use a fairly high percentage of it for some purpose in your life. Now, there is almost no relation between input and output. You get people who are information junkies – they get information and they don't do anything with it, they don't remember much of it – and that's a new situation in our culture.

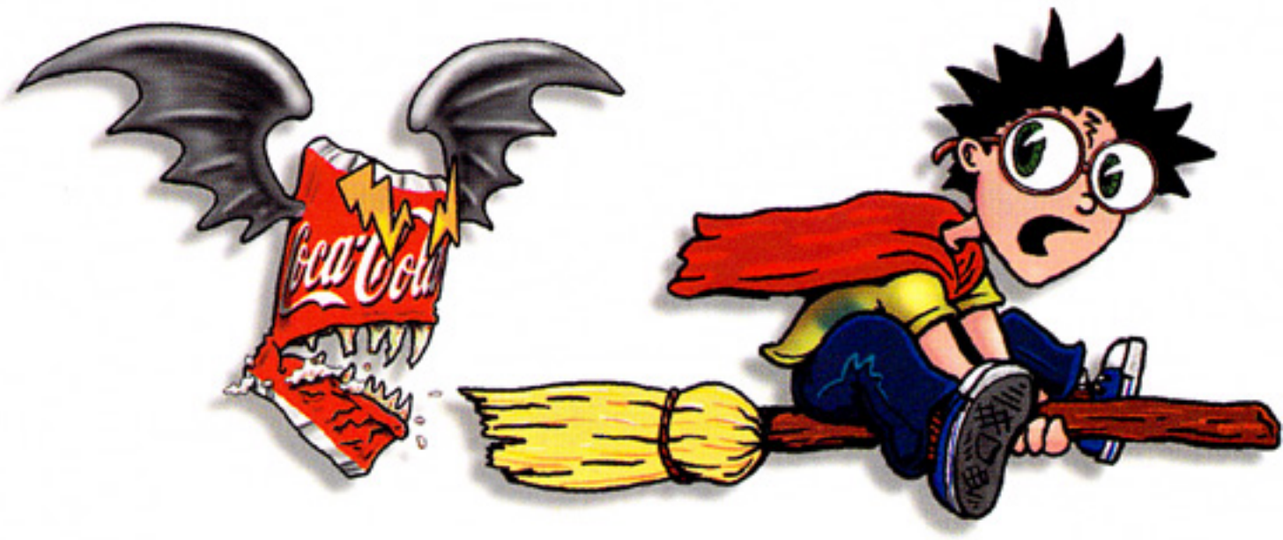
I think people are more aware of how their lives are altered by media. When you think of the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of television commercials that people are exposed to, that's something relatively new in our culture. You begin to think, 'What is all this about? What are we supposed to do about this?' More people now than ever before – I don't mean scholars, but just ordinary people – are very much interested in the kinds of effects that media has, not just on children but on politics, on social life, even on the idea of consumership.

Twenty-five years ago, you could get a bigger audience for a lecture on how to improve your backhand in tennis than you could for a talk about, let's say, how media affects children. But I think that has changed.

[A mental environmental movement] certainly would involve some new conceptions of education. We have to begin with the question, 'What is information for? How do you know whether you need information about something? What are the reliable sources of information? What do we mean by a reliable source? Who is controlling the output of information?' These questions would be part of the education of our young. To me, that would add up to a kind of response to an environment polluted with irrelevance.

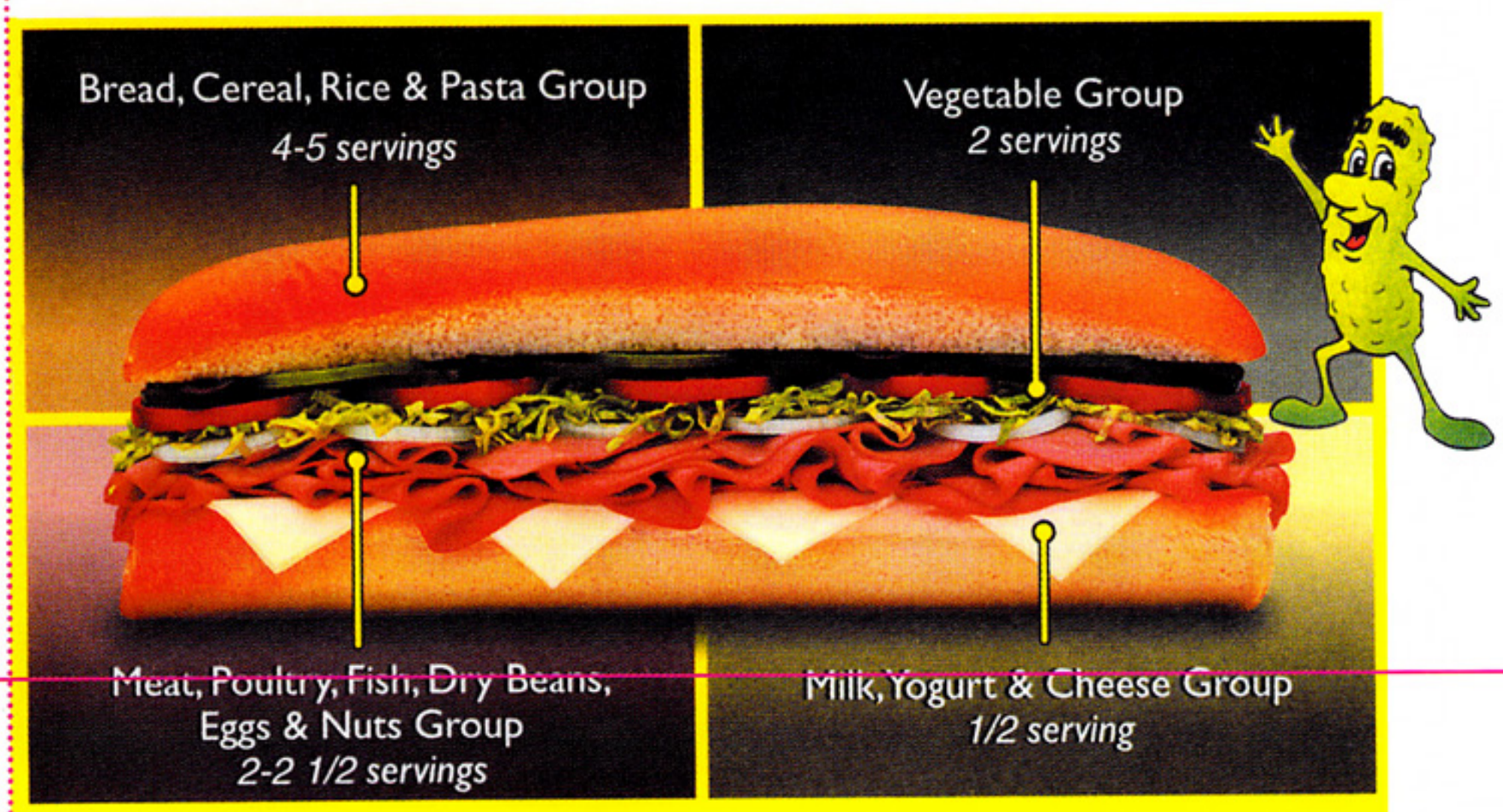
Aldous Huxley was talking about this 50 years ago, when he said it wasn't so much the un-truth of information, but the complete irrelevance of information that was going to be the problem in the end. You keep people distracted, and keep them from addressing issues that they need to address, by flooding them with all sorts of information about which they can do nothing. Other people come up with different responses, but the key to me is education."

PHOTO: DAVE NIDDRIE



Has Harry Potter fallen in with the Muggles? In a $150 million deal, Coca-Cola recently bought the global marketing rights to the new film "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," so don't be surprised when the boy-wizard is seen hawking what Michael Jacobson, executive director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, calls "liquid candy." Complaining that Coke, a substantial portion of the 14 billion gallons of soft drinks consumed each year in the US alone, and the independent-minded Potter aren't a healthy pair, CSPI has launched a new website, SaveHarry.com, urging Potter fans worldwide to e-mail author J.K. Rowling and beg her to pull out of the deal. According to CSPI, who brought us nutritional labels on American food, teenagers now glug twice as much soda as milk, when just 20 years ago milk was the 2-to-1 favorite. Credit that shift to Coca-Cola's immense marketing budget – well over $208 million in 2000. Like the wizards who dupe Muggles into overlooking an entire world of magic around them, Coke seems bent on keeping us all zoned out on sugar and caffeine.

TOGETHER, WE CAN ENHANCE THE LIVES OF STUDENTS.



Living La Vida Barbie

Have ads aimed at kids hit a highwater mark?

Once upon a time, Barbie was just a toy. A toy with body-image issues, to be sure – but still a toy. No more.

As the Mattel corporation is only too eager to report, the bottle-blond doll is now the top "lifestyle brand" for girls. Her rise will be the subject of a seminar – "Barbie: This Doll Means Business" – at New York's fall Advertising to Kids conference.

"The process of seeing children as a target market commoditizes childhood. Everything children are geared towards is tied to a profiting corporation," says Jelly Helm. Who is this guy – some PTA prude? Some aging Doctor Spocknik? Try a professor at the Virginia Commonwealth University's graduate school of advertising, and a former ad executive who still has Phil Knight in the Rolodex.

Advertisers now seek results through "guerrilla advertising," "seeding programs" and "Trojan Horse marketing." In Canada, for example, a school council might phone up Showbiz Productions to put on a dance. On the big night, Showbiz VJs seed the crowd with Nike shirts, while kids jump up and down with packs of Wrigley gum on their foreheads, making a game out of branding.

For fall 2001, Showbiz introduced school fashion shows across Canada. "Kids don't see it as marketing. They expect fashion shows to have brand-names attached," says Erika Shaker, the education projects director the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in Ottawa.

But increasingly, advertising to kids is at least as much minefield as gold mine. Commercial classroom television continues to flop in Canada, and some American schools are axing contracted relationships with particular brands of computer or cola. Workshops on ads that target kids are now themselves a target for protests. And in June 2000, responding to a petition by active members, the American Psychological Association assigned a task force to examine the use of psychological know-how to develop ad strategies.

Helm, too, is seeking limits to his profession. In "Saving Advertising," an essay printed in *Émigré* magazine last year, he calls for a ban on ads aimed at kids under 12 – a policy already in place in Sweden and the province of Quebec, and under consideration by the entire European Union.

"I've had tons of response – it really resonates with parents," says Helm. He adds, however, that the parents have always had the power to change. "As long as parents are letting their kids spend $20 a day on Pokémon cards, ad agencies can't lead the way on this. It's you and me, human beings in a democracy."

Alisa Smith

***LEN MASTERMAN** is a pioneer of media education. The author of* Teaching The Media *says corporations belong in school – on our terms, never theirs.*

"Corporate materials need to be handled with care. The fundamental issue is, 'Whose interests are being served? Is it the interests of the kids, or the interests of the corporation?' That's a question that has to be made explicit for the kids themselves. That's a question they must ask – and answer.

Within media education, for example, it might make sense to look at material on finances produced by the mega-banks. But you look at it in terms of, 'What information is being omitted? What *isn't* being said?' That would be a sort of subversive use of that material, which is what media education is for.

The commercial approach is to use education materials very much as self-promotional instruments. First of all, it's about creating awareness of the company, which is the first aim of most advertising. The second concern is that these kinds of materials tend to take a 'Gee whiz, aren't we great' approach. Look at the message from the media companies, for example: 'Here we are with all these pressures, these deadlines, all these correspondents here and there and everywhere – it's all last minute, it's all rushed. Certainly we make mistakes, but my God, aren't we professional?' There's an ideology there that's working in an unconscious way. These approaches tend to *increase* mystification of the media; they *increase* the distance between the student or the consumer and the media organization.

What tends to get hidden is the element of human agency involved. Who's doing the constructing, and according to what criteria? Whose interests are being served? What are the dilemmas and problems for the reporters themselves? What about a reporter who uncovers an unsavoury story around one of the company's principal advertisers? The internal tensions and contradictions within media organizations just miraculously evaporate, yet they're exactly what we need to understand.

Commercialism is rampant. Can there not be some areas that remain sacrosanct? From the parent's point of view – and I speak as a parent myself – schools are acting *in loco parentis*. It's a legal obligation to send your kids to school. Now, the fact that you could be sent to prison for not sending your kids to school places certain obligations on the educational system, and one of those obligations is not to use kids as fodder for commercial interests. It's to do other things. It's to educate kids; it's to provide some way of passing down to the next generation important cultural and moral and other values that society as a whole deems to be important. And drinking Coca Cola isn't one of these."

PHOTO: DAVE NIDDRIE

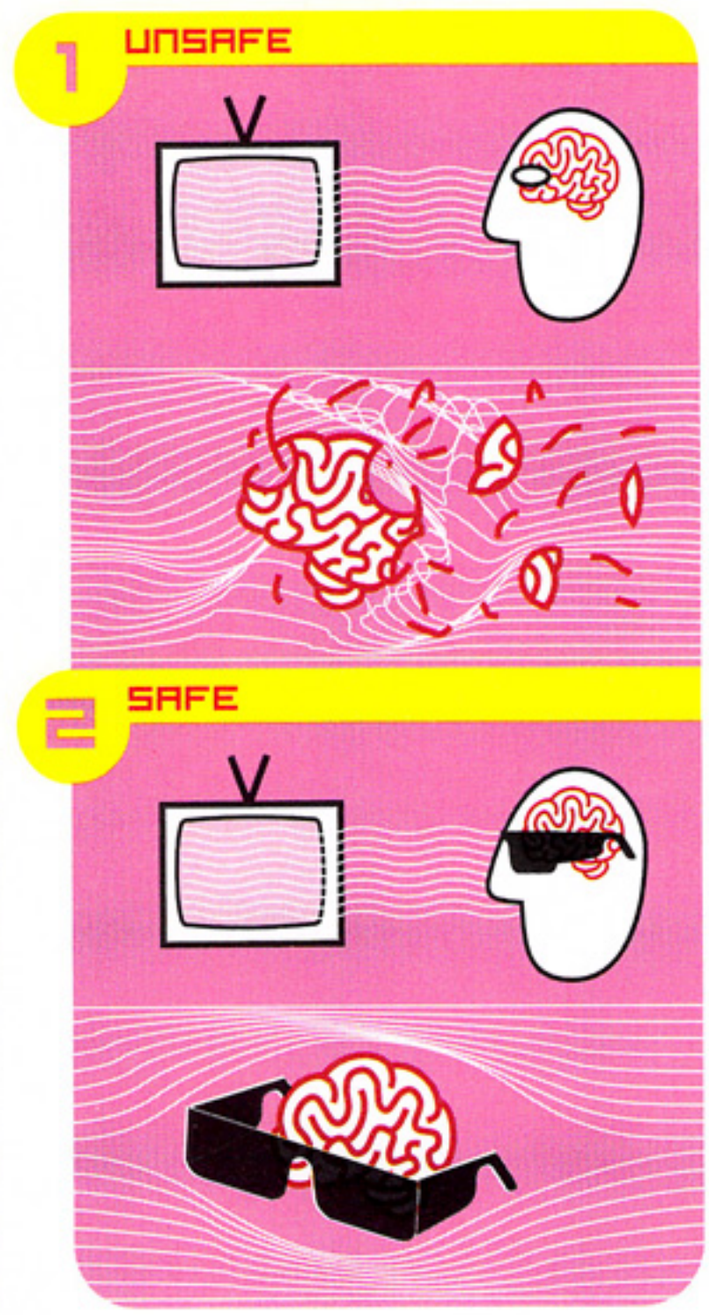


ILLUSTRATION: BILL TEXAS

Try This At School

Some classrooms aren't safe without the proper protection. With Channel One at the head of the class in 40 percent of US middle and high schools, many students are forced to see at least two minutes of ads a day – which adds up to an entire school day per year of lost instructional time.

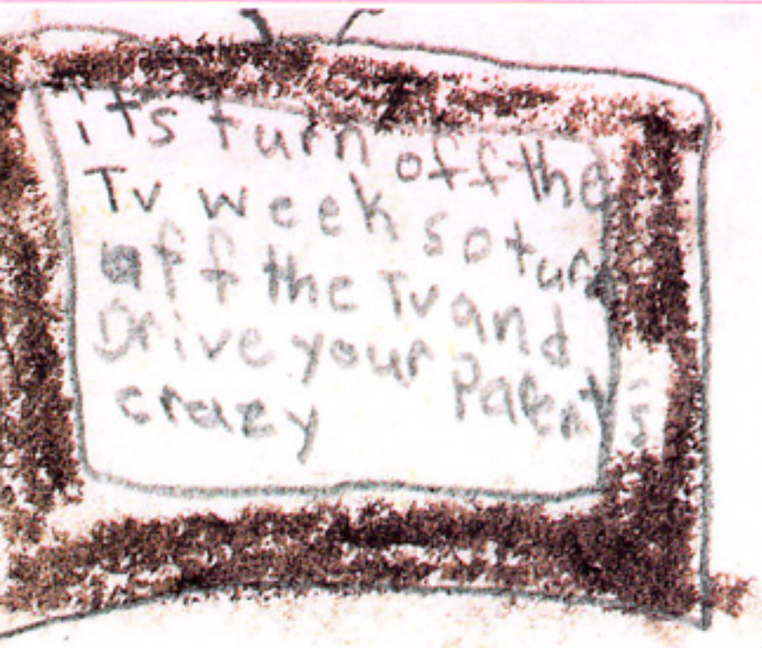
Did they ask students' permission to bring in the tube? No. Is teaching with TV the best we can do? Hardly.

Luckily, you can wear Brain Blinders: solid black glasses in stylish cardboard (template at <www.adbusters.org/campaigns/blinders>, or DIY). Great for protecting the wetware, they're also a fashion statement: "I am not a target market."

But a classroom protest is only a start. There's a nationwide campaign to return schools to a philosophy of commercial-free education with human beings in charge. More info? <www.commercialfree.org>.

It's turn off the tv week so. Turn off the Tv and Drive your pareant's Crazy.

Kayla Small, age 8

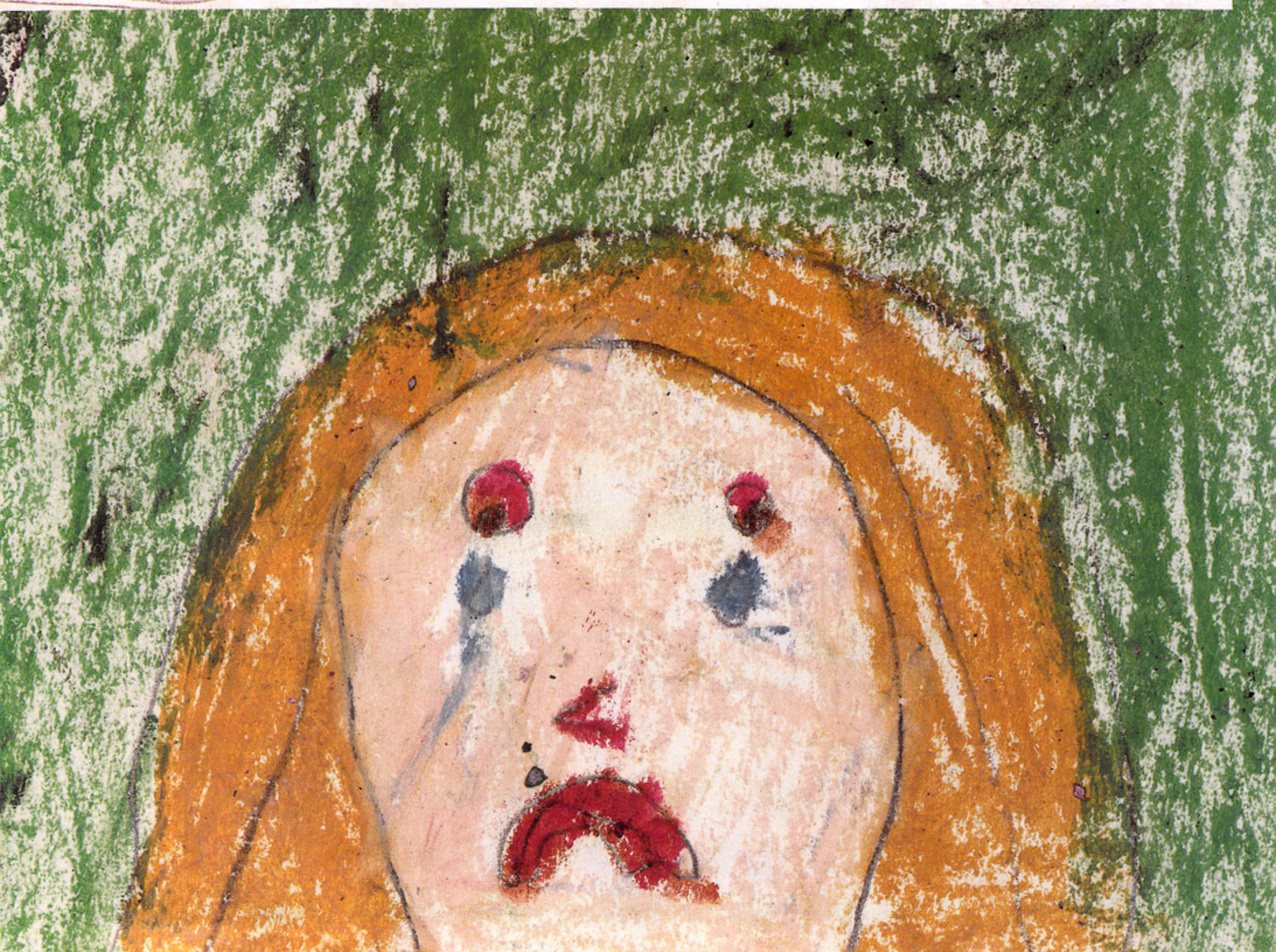


STOP watching TV and go outside and get a Life!

Harrison Spelman, age 8

My Sister Wanted to watch
tv. My Mom needed
to Watch the news.
evrey boty wanted to watch
tv but we coudenit. there was
Nothing to do. evrey boty
Sat there and did Nothing.
evrey botey was bisy So we coudenit
have a Play date

jesse benedetti, age 8



your imagination may not be your own.

PHOTO: UNA KNOX

***JERRY MANDER** is president of the International Forum on Globalization, and a senior fellow at the Public Media Center in San Franciso. Twenty-three years after the publication of his book* Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television, *Mander still sees TV as the primary threat to a healthy mental environment – though a competitor is fast on its heels.*

"Television is an instrument of mental cloning on a global scale. That's its primary job: to get everyone in the world– whether they're in the Western industrialized nations or on islands in the Pacific – to view things in exactly the same way, to absorb an identical model of the way life is supposed to be lived. And also to change them internally so they are merged with the larger corporate technological system.

When I wrote my book [Four Arguments] there were plenty of locally owned television systems. But under free trade, giant global corporations are completely free to merge and buy up everybody, and they have been doing that. Three quarters of global television is now operated by fewer than ten corporations – notably Disney and AOL Time Warner. So we have the appalling situation of the majority of the world gathering nearly identical images over long periods of time from a very small number of gigantic corporations run by a handful of billionaires.

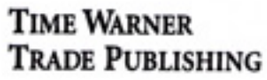
Unfortunately, the Internet has likewise been more in service to global global corporations than to anyone else. It's assumed to be an empowering instrument because everyone gets to use it to gather information, and to organize. But the Internet is still more beneficial to global corporations than to us. It has enabled them to operate on a scale and at a speed that they never could before. Ten years from now I think you'll agree the Internet has been the greatest centralizing instrument of all time.

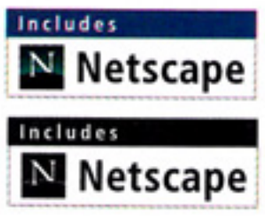
Are we at the crisis point? We're way beyond it. The crisis point was thirty years ago. Aldous Huxley said, in the 1930s, that the greatest danger was that people would come to love their servitude. The crisis comes from not only the reality of that, but also from the fact that this economic model that people have bought into is completely unsustainable in environmental and social terms. It gives the greatest power to a small number of people who happen to be chewing up the planet at a fantastic rate. That whole model of consumption and corporate celebration and living by corporate models is killing us, and will continue to do so until everything collapses – which, judging from climate change, ozone depletion and other measurements, could be fairly soon."

Assuming you had the will – or the time – to cover every logo in your home, what would be the effect on your mind in a month? A year? Ten years?

PHOTO: JEFF HARRIS

AOL Time Warner





AOL Instant Messenger™

MAPQUEST.COM™

Money

Teen People

THE WB TELEVISION NETWORK

Turner

CNN INTERNATIONAL

TCM

INFODIVERSITY

Where do memes come from? Well, the stork don't bring 'em.In a real culture, ideas are generated spontaneously by people, their communities, their interactions. Memes (ideas, songs, stories, trends, philosophies, religions) percolate up from the bottom, from people with no agenda but to describe their world, their feelings. This is how progress happens. It's how new technologies are invented, books become best-sellers, trends grow, cool is born. It's a wild process. A *natural* process. In the physical environment, sex brings genes together, to combine and replicate. In the mental environment, memes behave much the same way. They meet in coffee shops, leather bars, chat rooms, protest lines and they go home together. Meme sex is how a culture propagates itself and stays robust. And the mating dance keeps going for as long as it can.

But what happens when most of the memes no longer rise up from the bottom, but ooze down from the top – from sources like ad agencies and PR firms and the commercial mass media? The whole mental environment is plunged into chaos. The locus of cultural power is dislocated. Authenticity and spontaneity are lost. The wild mating dance is replaced by a kind of culture-manufacturing machine. Memes now spread, not when people interact, but when they switch on their TVs or computers, or when they read a wire-service story in the paper. The result is a different kind of meme sex: one-way, non-consensual, silent, and, in a profound way, violent. Three thousand marketing messages rammed into your neocortex every day, whether you like it or not.

In a real, authentic culture the best ideas win. But in the kind of commercially- driven culture we now live in, it's the most often repeated ideas that win. That's a tragedy.

When wild memes stop mating, everything starts to die. Our thinking runs dry, our imaginations atrophy, culture starts spinning in circles. >>>

PHOTO: PETER RALPH

Power Switch

And now some free speech from our sponsors

As dogs to kids, and Glocks to mobsters, the US First Amendment has become the ad industry's favorite source of security. In the last decade, corporations have used a free-speech argument to successfully overturn government bans on liquor advertising (1996, Rhode Island) and casino-gambling promotions (1999, Virginia). And now they have won again, with tobacco. On June 28, the federal Supreme Court declared a Massachusetts ban on cigarette advertising unconstitutional.

Chuffed, and emboldened, many transnationals are now leaning on free-speech platforms as they slip multimillion dollar greenwashing campaigns into the public mind. (Environmentalist Mark Kapsky's case against Nike, which has played fast and loose with the facts in its defense of its manufacturing practices – was defeated by two levels of California court and is currently before the Supreme Court in that state.) Advertisers, the collateral winners in all these cases, have used it to place billboards in urban centers, in defiance of bans and zoning laws. At the first hint of restriction on the promotion of products that while, legal, are harmful or even deadly, Corporate America mounts a ferocious First Amendment defense – and almost always prevails.

In the process, the distinction between commercial and noncommercial speech is vanishing. "All involved in advertising can be gratified the court has shown advertising's 'limited' First Amendment rights are not a sham," *Ad Age* gleefully reported recently. But even that understates what's happening . The marketing messages of corporations are being treated just like the personal views of private citizens. The quagmire of Clinton-strength distinctions that legal experts have been debating for years – What is "free"? What is "speech"? What is "limited"? – seems to be drying up. American jurisprudence has spoken: Commercial speech is protected. Slippery "image advertising," like the feel-good, brand-building spin-campaigns of Nike and Exxon and Shell, is protected.

Where does that leave the rest of us? With an opportunity – at least in theory. The courts have made clear their bias toward open public dialogue: Let the messages sort it out in the public arena, unencumbered by pesky cultural and social considerations. Pure meme warfare, baby. If commercial messages have First Amendment protection, surely anti-commercial ones do, too.

And yet it doesn't work out that way, because social marketers of ideas run into barriers product advertisers don't face. The airwaves may be a public resource, but most social marketing messages never get that far. Corporate-owned networks can reject them at their discretion, and they do. So now, bizarrely, corporations have more communication freedom than citizens do. GM and Ford can say "cars are sexy" six ways to the Florida Turnpike, but you or I can't say "cars eat ozone." McDonald's can buy a billion dollars worth of airtime for ads that say Big Macs taste great, but a pediatrician can't buy airtime for one ad that says Big Macs are 53 percent fat.

The word "limited" didn't disappear. It just migrated to the people's side.

Harry Flood

I'd Like To Buy A Powell

Colin's son can't say no to big media

"Regulation is the oppressor here," explained Michael Powell, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, at a conservative forum last year. By his thinking, free markets should rule the $950 billion communication industry, and the government – his boss – is keeping the little guy down. The "oppressed" happens to be underdogs like AOL Time Warner, Vivendi, and Viacom, who must struggle to make ends meet under restrictions intended to prevent media monopolies. But when asked recently what the words "public interest" mean in the FCC's mission, Powell replied, "I have no idea... I try to make the best judgement I can in ways that benefit consumers. Beyond that I don't know."

MEDIA MONOPOLY

Clearly the man who calls corporations (not citizens) "clients," is eager to lay waste to one of the FCC's bedrock mandates.

Son of Secretary of State Colin Powell, the 38-year old is no stranger to the upper echelons of power, both political and corporate. Just four years out of Georgetown Law School, Senator John McCain tapped him for the commission in 1997, and when the Bush administration took over, he found himself in its top seat. With a former Disney lobbyist, chief of staff Marsha McBride, at his side, Powell ramrodded through dozens of merger reviews: the $29 billion fusion of Deutsche Telekom and Voicestream; the $4.4 billion acquisition of Chris-Craft and its 10 TV stations by Rupert Murdoch and Co. (a move that disregarded at least three FCC regulations), plus a number of reviews former chair William Kennard had slated for public comment. And when voting to approve the AOL Time Warner merger – a deal his father stood to make around $9 million on – Powell failed to recuse himself, despite the obvious conflict of interest. Dissenting the approval of the Chris-Craft buyout by Fox, FCC member Gloria Tristiani observed that "this decision shows the lengths the commission will go to avoid standing in the way of media mergers."

Powell's unwillingness to say no has many casualties, the diversity of broadcast viewpoints being the most serious. In an April decision, the FCC voted to eliminate the "dual network" rule, so now Viacom can, for the first time, own both CBS and UPN. And many of the radio mergers given the go-ahead earlier this year would create local monopolies, where one company is permitted to control 50 percent of a given market's ad revenue or two companies can control 70 percent of total ad revenue. It's got the folks at Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting up in arms.

"Powell has been very clear about his intentions to turn over more and more of the publicly owned broadcast spectrum to already huge media corporations," says Jim Naureckas of FAIR. "The FCC's total lack of interest in protecting Americans as citizens and consumers is disgraceful."

Described in the press as "a younger and brighter version of George W. Bush," Powell is considered by some the Republican Party's golden boy. Given his rapport with corporate media (who tossed $1.07 million into Bush's campaign purse), the beltway devotion of the likes of John McCain (who received $685,929 from communication interests in 2000) and the fundraising power of the family name, Powell's political trajectory is arcing ever upward. Perhaps toward the presidency. The question is, Will he salute or just shake his rump in triumph as he passes democracy, on its way down.

Paul Schmelzer

PHOTO: MARK WILSON/GETTY IMAGES

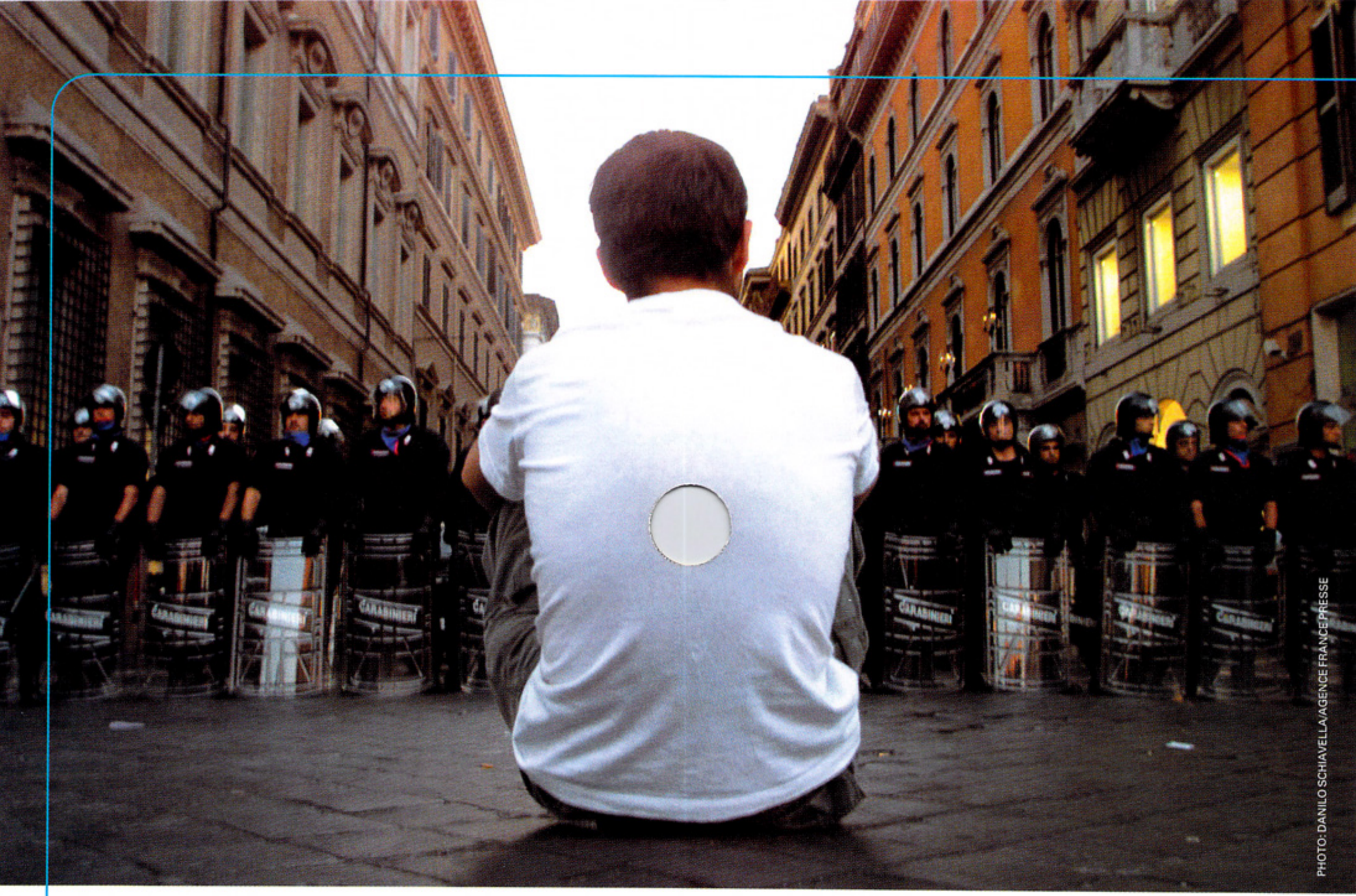


PHOTO: DANILO SCHIAVELLA/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

Between The Wars

And now, building the perpetual protest machine

Suddenly we are asked to measure our gains against smashed faces and internal bleeding and emergency spleen surgery. We're asked to measure our sense of purpose against death, like that of a 23-year-old activist killed by a 21-year-old policeman in the streets of Genoa.

It's a difficult algebra; still, the strength of the great global protests has always been their complexity. The mass gatherings press hard questions – what tactics? at what price? – but it is far too late to turn back now. The gatherings are our best working model for a "global grassroots," the project of this decade.

But a second wave is building, as stunning as the first but less predictable, less tangible, more personal. If the slogan of the first round was This Is What Democracy Looks Like, then the message of the second is We Are Everywhere.

It's a protest on every campus as the WTO bunkers down in Qatar; it's worldwide mall mayhem on Buy Nothing Day; it's a critical-mass ride on 10,000 bridges at rush hour; it's a thousand Indian farmers burning fields of genetically modified grain. It's a single day in a single big city, and Niketown is shut down by a harmless stink bomb, there's a lockdown in front of the corporate TV station, a lone ranger is marching through town with a Corporate America flag, there's a sweatshop protest in the shopping district, and George W. Bush just got pied on the evening news.

It's a culture jam. It's what we can do in between.

Culture jamming is *living in protest*. It is a wild twin to personal and public politics – you choose a vegan diet, sure; you march on the capital, yes; and then you paint-bomb billboards with friends on the weekend. Culture jamming is a chance to echo the slogans of the streets anywhere and anytime.

A couple months ago an odd artifact popped up around the *Adbusters'* office: a simple circle, black, without a single graphic flourish. We're still not sure what it means, this black spot, but it feels like a mark whose time has just come. It fits nicely on almost any symbol of our age, from TV screens to *Maxim* magazine, from swooshes to drug ads, from the shirts of street protesters to greenwash websites. Somehow, it hits you in the gut. You can imagine it slipped into the hand of Nike boss Phil Knight, or AOL Time Warner CEO Steve Case.

They'll want to know who "owns" this damned black doodle. But no one does, and no one can.

Staff

ROBERT MCCHESNEY *is a research professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign. He is a longtime media democracy critic and the author of, most recently,* Rich Media, Poor Democracy. *If the medium is the message, says McChesney, then the media needs a movement.*

"I've always argued that people who want to change the world had better get serious about changing media and communications, and not think it's a dependent variable that will work itself out once you've changed everything else. What we've seen is that the rapidly evolving global movement for democracy – and against neoliberalism and hyper-commercialism – is making media reform an integral part, woven right into the heart of the movement. The dominance of the corporate media system has made this almost unavoidable.

The major ideological defence of the corporate media is that the Internet is changing the system, making it much more competitive and responsive, and that therefore previous concerns about corporate control or commercialism are now completely irrelevant. If you don't like what you're getting, then go to one of the other 80 billion websites, or start your own. Everyone should just shut up and shop.

It's a lot easier to start a website than to organize people to get a sufficient force to change the system. The sad and inescapable truth is we have to do both. If we concede that all the laws and regulations and subsidies can go to these corporate giants, but we're going to have our groovy websites, then barring a phenomenal upsurge in political activity we will guarantee our marginality.

The evidence is overwhelming and irrefutable that the Internet is not going to radically change and improve our media system. If you read the business press, like *Fortune* magazine (owned by AOL Time Warner), they acknowledge that the Internet is basically run by corporations and it's just tightening up their control of the commercial media. But then you read *Time* magazine, one of their publications for the general public, and you see cover stories on how people will be publishing their own books on-line and movie studios are going to have to start giving their movies away. When they're talking to people who are going to invest money, they're telling the truth. When they're talking to the masses, they spew out this public relations hooey.

The media system we have is not a natural system and it's not created through free market competition. It's the direct result of government policies made in our names but without our informed consent. We have to democratize it.

The biggest problem that activists have is that the vast majority of people don't know we exist. They experience the world we all experience, but they're not exposed to the critique we make. I still remember watching just two or three things on commercial television, like an interview with Gore Vidal, that changed the whole way I look at the world and set me on the course I'm on. If you can get on one show like that and can squeeze in one comment that twists one person around, it's worth it."

Activist Events

Troubled by poverty and big business? Why not shut down the financial hub of the largest city in your country? Join the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty in their **Toronto Financial District Shutdown**, Tuesday, October 16. More info, <ontario.indymedia.org >.

Do It Just. Take part in the **Trade Justice Carnival**, Saturday, November 3, in London. Join the procession of floats and folks in costume. Hear Naomi Klein speak at the finale in Trafalgar Square. More info, contact Friends of the Earth, <info@foe.co.uk>.

To avoid another showdown like the Battle in Seattle, the **WTO** meets in the Persian Gulf state of Qatar, November 9-13, 2001, where the right to protest is severely restricted. But that won't stop dissent. Many activists are planning local and national events like the Canadian cross-country **Quebec to Qatar Caravan** which ends with a Day of Action in Ottawa, November 9. More info, <www.wtoaction.org>.

Major anti-corporate protests in Nice and Gothenburg have met European Union expansion into Eastern Europe. The next big **EU challenge** is planned for December 14 in Brussels. More info, <www.d14.be>.

Around the world people will snip up their credit cards and celebrate **Buy Nothing Day**, November 23, 2001. More info, <adbusters.org>.

After the outrage of Genoa, the **G8** is nervous. The new chair, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, set the next summit in the fairly remote mountain town of Kananaskis, Alberta, June 26-28, 2002. For info, see <g8.activist.ca>, and also treat yourself to <tao.ca/~wrench/dist/g8/ewok.html> .

One To Watch

Today on Where Are They Now?: Planet Earth. Talk about 15 minutes of fame. At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the planet was the center of our universe, and world leaders looked ready to draft "effective environmental polices" and to "reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption."

Then it all fell off the map. Within three years, ecology was forgotten and the global media was warming its hands around the Dow Jones stock ticker.

Now comes the World Summit on Sustainable Development – "Rio + 10" – in Johannesburg, South Africa, September 2-11, 2002. Can environmentalism finally capture the energy of the global grassroots movement?

The link is plain enough. "While they were negotiating Rio, they were also negotiating the start-up to the WTO," recalls Angela Rickman of the Sierra Club of Canada. "Out of Rio we got a biodiversity treaty with plenty of gums, and out of the WTO we got trade rules with plenty of real teeth."

For Rio + 10 developments, watch <www.adbusters.org>, <southafrica.indymedia.org> *and your favorite eco-websites.*

Media D-Day
Party in the media blind spot

It is 10:23 a.m. on October 19, 2001, and a TV editor pulls another press release off the wire. What's this? "Media Democracy Day." A teach-in is planned, a debate (*ho-hum*) – but wait-just-a-New-York-minute. There's also a protest newspaper being illegally dropped in to the vending boxes of the local daily. And two dozen people angry about media mergers plan to risk arrest by locking themselves to the front doors . . . of a certain TV station . . . today, at 10:30 . . .

This is the beauty of Media Democracy Day, an international brainstorm launched this year by Canadian activists: it's a media event that puts the media's feet to the fire. So who will cover it? And how?

For too long, activists have been the trained tiger in the mass-media circus. Told that only the media-savvy make the primetime, we fine-tune our performances and amp up our stunts; in return, we get a few column-inches of ink or a glimpse of our banners on the evening news. Meanwhile, the gatekeepers let slide a tidal wave of entertainment, advertisement, jingles, journalism and pop analysis that props up consumerism, boosts the "progress" economy, cheerleads corporate culture, cranks up the spectacle, and never fails to remind us that oil company CEOs care about the environment, too.

PHOTO: DAVE NIDDRIE

The mainstream media has rested on its mythical claim "to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." But *it* is the comfortable, while the list of the afflicted includes every bench-warmer in consumer democracy's elimination dance: all those troubled by media convergence; any reporter who believes in "change from the inside"; advocates of independent and public journalism; all small presses; every subvertiser; all those with media-violence fatigue; anyone who believes airwaves and bandwidth are a public trust; every activist demanding "the right to communicate"; and each man, woman and child who can't find a damn thing worth watching on the tube.

It's quite a mob, and on October 19, it will begin to come together – the first global party ever held in a media blind spot. Expect pranks and jams, debates entitled "Should we still be talking to the mainstream media?", and anxious reporters calling HQ for advice. The question that day won't be whether the dog is wagging the tail or the tail is wagging the dog. No, the question this time is whether we can get the dog to bite itself on the ass.

CEES J. HAMELINK *is a professor of communication at the University of Amsterdam, and honorary president of the International Association for Media and Communication Research. He has published 15 books on communications, culture, and human rights.*

"The growing importance of media, at least in my analysis, is strongly related to advertising. Some people tend to believe we are moving towards an information society or communications society. I think we are really moving to what I like to call a 'global billboard society.'

Now, that has enormous cultural ramifications. These commercial messages around the world do indeed determine people's mental environment. Tell people who they are, tell people to define themselves as consumers, tell people that the most important cultural activity is to spend most of your lifetime in the shopping mall. And not just shopping because you need to, but for fun. Those who have the purchasing capacity are the real citizens of the world, and the rest just don't belong.

Maybe 20 or 25 years ago, some of us were tremendously worried about a new world order. That all seems to be children's games compared to the situation today, which is much more serious, much more controlled, much more consolidated and concentrated.

One of my goals is that the People's Communications Charter would eventually lead to the institution of an international independent ombuds office. I would like to see a place where people whose cultural and communication rights – whether the right to free speech, or the right to not be surveilled around the clock, or the right to your own language – could go and complain, where they will be heard, and people will work towards a possible remedy.

The right to cultural production and the protection of that right has become very strongly encoded and enshrined in the whole field of intellectual-property rights. It is remarkable that when cultural rights are formulated and the rights of corporations to own intellectual property are formulated, we have very strong enforcement mechanisms. We have arbitration and dispute mechanisms, and trade organizations. But the human-rights dimension of these rights – or if you want, the moral dimension of these rights – has hardly been protected at all.

Rather than waiting and hoping that at some time governments will come to their senses and help us out, or that corporations might become so benign that they are willing to see the light, the best thing to do for ourselves as citizens is to organize ourselves. To claim these rights, and to try to institute mechanisms through which we can begin to ask for attention on these things. And how can we create these mechanisms in such a way that in the long term they will have effect and make a difference? We need to keep that in mind when we are creating movements to deal with cultural and mentality issues."

The People's Communications Charter (<www.pccharter.net>) has been signed by more than 200,000 people.

PHOTO: DAVE NIDDRIE

THEODORE ROSZAK, *a professor of history at California State University in Hayward, is the author of* The Voice of the Earth: An Exploration of Ecopsychology. *Our mental environment is producing casualties, he argues, and the casualties go on to produce our culture.*

"How often in history did people wake up in the morning and have someone tell them what they needed in life? All through the day advertising is trying to convince you of what you require in order to manage. Of course that's been going on since advertising began. But just within my lifetime the technique of getting between people and the ordinary aspects of life – from eating to sleeping to working to sex to diet – has compounded enormously. The number of gatekeepers between us and political issues continues to multiply. The people who dominate the news industry are intervening in often mindless and stupid ways. It's troubling to me that people who seem reasonably intelligent have gone badly askew when they take up a political issue. I think it's because they're taught that they're not competent to deal with this until they have listened to media experts. And once they do that they're often more confused and making stupider decisions than if they had sat down and trusted their own thinking.

A minute or two into a TV news program the announcer will usually lead into a commercial with, 'When we come back . . . .' Come back from what? Another commercial. That kind of fragmentation of the attention span is not just media misbehavior as usual – it's a new and special feature. It's an attempt by somebody to make things so discontinuous, so chaotic, that you can't put any two thoughts together. Instead what you get is a flurry of images and sound bites and mental chaos. If kids, especially, are brought up with that kind of a vision of the world, they're never going to know how to think about something. And that makes them more and more dependent.

Here's another question. What happens when people who were raised on attention-and-intellect-diminishing media grow up and take over the media for the next generation? I think that's what we're seeing. More and more media gatekeepers are themselves the unwitting casualties of the bad media habits of the past. That's where the dumbing down becomes a downward spiral. And the people in charge don't even see it happening. They're not cynical any longer; they're simply perceptually disabled. I think this is euphemistically called being 'media savvy.'"

The Impotence Of Being Earnest

A strong statement on the new media voice, followed by a suckerpunch

A friend of mine – a journalist – was recently asked to do a complete rewrite of a short personal feature for a mainstream newspaper. There was no problem with the content, no doubt of the facts, no quarrel over the ideology or even the standard of writing. The issue was *tone*. The piece, the editor said, was "too heartfelt."

It's a puzzling complaint, akin to a baseball coach asking his players to stop giving 110 percent, and to go with, say, 85 percent instead. But then, the media industry is that kind of behind-the-looking-glass world. The mainstream media has long been averse to profoundly held belief – witness the ongoing failure to cover religion as much more than preachers with their pants down and hillbillies who collect wives. The reasons are economic as well as cultural, with the economics, as usual, helping to shape the culture.

The hallowed vision of "objective" journalism began as a twinkle in a press baron's eye. The idea is simple enough: A partisan paper will sell only to partisans (a smaller market), while an apparently non-partisan paper has potential appeal to anyone. Thus did the papers of the past century begin to market the mushy middle. In times of war, they're for war; in times of hardship, they're for charity; in times of plenty, they're for whoever's buying lunch.

And then, sometime in the past decade, the objective pose stopped reeling in the audience. The public had figured out the trick, seen the palmed card. Do journalists not have prejudices and beliefs like the rest of us? Are they somehow less susceptible to faulty logic, to red herring, to the loss of brain cells during high school?

The media was losing its voice. The conundrum: How to find a new voice – one with loads more 'tude – while preserving the inoffensive apparent neutrality that appeals to the broadest market?

The post-objective voice, then, is the voice of irony. It is the arch voice, cynical enough to appear subjective, yet disassociated enough to be unearnest, unattached and above all, uncontroversial. It is the contrarian voice, its sere wisdom sapping the juice of every attempt to confront real power. Its only enemy is earnestness, and through the powerful alchemy of the contrarian voice, "alarm" becomes "paranoia," "concern" becomes "zealotry," and "faith" is a blinking light reading "SUCKER." It constantly serves the purported purpose of media – that of curmudgeonly watchdog – by undermining all sense of purpose in society itself.

But the media don't speak with this voice in a vacuum. The contrarian voice is the voice of an age, just as effective for convincing ourselves to take the money and do a little moonlighting for Big Tobacco (*never let the goody-two-shoes get you down*) as it is for whisking away global warming's sense of crisis.

In fact, the new voice can even be seen in the structure of our neighborhoods. Places of privilege are no longer aloof but "cool," while "earnest" locations have the stink of charity and yearning. Witness the family resource center, advertised in plain fonts, its logo composed of paper dolls holding hands. Who would go to such a place? The answer is obvious: only the desperate.

James MacKinnon

JAY ROSEN *is the author of* What Are Journalists For? *and a professor of journalism at New York University. Here, he discusses public journalism and its potential role in media reform.*

There have been waves of interest within the news industry around key concerns like accuracy, credibility and fairness, with organizations like the American Society of Newspaper Editors doing some higher studies. There's never been one, as far as I know, on accountability. American journalism does not have a grand tradition of self-examination.

The frontier in press accountability is probably to be found in public journalism projects, which require news organizations to explain themselves and their priorities in a way that hasn't been happening. One of the earliest and still best examples: During the 1992 presidential election, a partnership of print and broadcast media synthesized a 'citizen's agenda' with campaign coverage. What was that? Well, they weren't claiming, 'We don't have any priorities – we just tell it like it is.' They went a step further and said, 'This is what seems to us to be most important this year, and we want you to participate. We are going to look at the race through this prism, so you all know where we're coming from.' If the *New York Times* ever did that about *anything*, it would be a revolution.

Now, an election campaign is something the news industy *has* to cover. Media reform isn't like that. It's a special interest to a small percentage of people. The question is whether media reform is in fact an issue that citizens care about. The fact that a lot of activists think it is doesn't convince me. Perhaps it ought to be, but if your view is that it ought to be then you have the task of persuasion in public discourse.

The answer lies in the tradition that people have used throughout history: social movements. You keep beating the drums. Globalization didn't get on the agenda because the media woke up one day. Globalization finally reached the point where people were motivated to mobilize.

If you're interested in media reform, you need to create political pressure. In the United States, the federal government has basically evacuated, over the past two years, the whole concept of 'the public interest' within any kind of regulation of the media. There is none, essentially. The public interest is defined as 'Do whatever you want to do' – there have been explicit statements to that effect by people like the chair of the Federal Communications Commission. It's a political issue. It's also a political failure. This is an area where, if someone was looking for a way to get media reform on the agenda, pressure could be brought to bear.

'There is no political interest. Isn't that a good place to start?'

The Great Global Real e-State Grab

Where the public gets it in the privates

Question: What is the single most valuable piece of property worth owning at the dawn of the information age? Answer: The radio frequencies – the electromagnetic spectrum – over which an increasing amount of communication and commercial activity will be broadcast in the era of wireless communications. Our PCs, palm pilots, wireless internet, cellular phones, pagers, radios and television all rely on the radio frequencies of the spectrum to send and receive messages, pictures, audio and data.

Most of us never give the spectrum a passing thought. We regard it, more or less, like the oxygen we breathe, as a free good. In reality, the spectrum is controlled and administered by governments who, in turn, license the various radio frequencies to commercial and other institutions for broadcast. In other words, in every country, the electromagnetic system is owned by the government on behalf of the people.

But now powerful commercial media are seeking to gain total control over the airwaves.

On February 7, 37 leading US economists signed a joint letter asking the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to allow broadcasters to lease in secondary markets the spectrum they currently license from the government. The letter, which went virtually unnoticed by the general public, is the opening salvo in a radical plan to wrest control of the entire spectrum from governments around the world, and to make the radio frequencies a private preserve of global media giants. If they succeed, the nation-state will have lost one of its last remaining vestiges of real power – the ability to regulate access to broadcast communications within its own geographic borders.

This story starts several years ago when a conservative think-tank called The Progress and Freedom Foundation published a paper called "The Telecom Revolution: An American Opportunity." Claiming the current system of government-controlled airwaves was needlessly inefficient, it called for the spectrum to be carved up: The frequencies already in use would be titled over to the broadcasters occupying them, and the unused portions sold off as private "electronic real estate." (The FCC, no longer needed, would be abolished.) That idea seemed a bit too ambitious even for the most experienced Washington corporate lobbyists. Still, hearings on the proposal were conducted in Congress – and less than a month after George Bush assumed the presidency, the letter from the 37 economists turned up on the FCC's doorstep.

The new thinking: First, secure a partial privatization plan, allowing commercial licensees to sell and lease their leased spectrum. Once done, the commercial foundation would be laid for a final conversion from government licensing of the spectrum to a future sell-off to the private sector. Other nations would be encouraged to follow suit and sell off their spectrums to global media companies. If some balked at the idea of relinquishing control over their airwaves, international trade sanctions could be imposed to force compliance.

In the industrial age, exchanging property in markets was the sine qua non of commerce. The role of national governments was to protect property and markets. But in the new commercial world being born, having access to the flow of information in telecommunications networks becomes at least as important as exchanging property in markets. Of course, those who can pay will be granted that access. But what about the 62 percent of people on Earth who have never made a telephone call, and the 40 percent who have no electricity? How will they ever get a voice, or an ear?

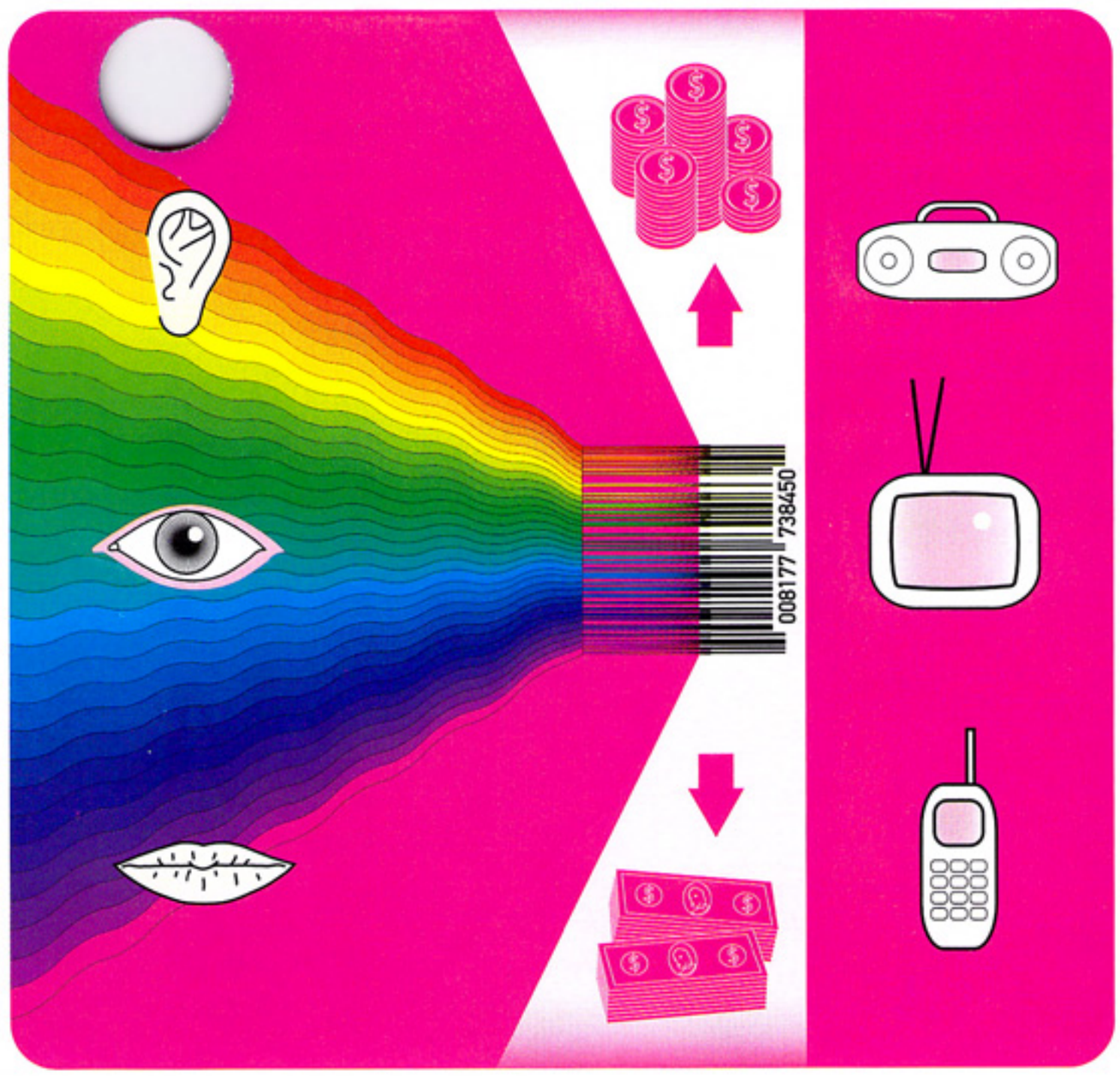


ILLUSTRATION: BILL TEXAS

When our very right to communicate with one another is no longer assured or secured by the government but controlled by global media conglomerates, can basic freedoms and real democracy continue to exist?

Jeremy Rifkin is the author of *The Age of Access* and president of The Foundation on Economic Trends in Washington , DC.

define as humans
NOT CORPORATIONS

too passive

ARTICLE 19 OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

but WHO gets access?!

Every human being has the right to communicate in any medium. This right includes freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to seek, receive and impart information, regardless of frontiers.

MEDIA CARTA

Freedom to vote, smoke, dress down, ACT UP, disagree, organize, bear arms, ride helmetless – America is about nothing if not individual freedoms. But there's one freedom very few people are fighting for because hardly anyone realizes it's being denied. This is a new kind of freedom, and it may well be the most important one of them all:

Freedom in the mental realm.

It's hard to define exactly, but it has a lot to do with privacy – the right to walk into a bank or a mall or a sports stadium without having your picture taken, to work in an office without having your correspondence secretly recorded, to drive around without being tracked by hidden video cameras. It has to do with dignity – the feeling that you can move through the culturescape and feel like an individual, alive and unique, instead of a datapoint or content receiver or consumer drone. It has to do with reserving the right to beg out of the corporate panopticon.

Most people today are denied the enjoyment of basic cultural rights – their ideas and expressions don't matter. Media Carta says that you and I are entitled to a voice. To speak up about climate change, President Bush's energy proposal or Nike's labor practices. To walk into your local TV station and buy 30 seconds of air if the mood grabs you. To not just have the option of turning off your TV if you don't like the program, but to *change* the program; to feel part of the cultural process, hear the raucous choir of the voices of your neighbors, real people with something to say but nothing to sell. Because now you, and not the corporations, are in control.

Every age fights its own unique human-rights battle. The battle for Media Carta is shaping up as the human-rights battle of our age: a great personal, intellectual, social, cultural and legal struggle for the right to control our own minds.

This is a fight we cannot afford to lose (much less avoid). Half a dozen megacorporations already control the bulk of all planetary information flows. Global capitalism sustains itself with a massive internal machinery of propaganda. At stake is the ability to shape our own consciousness, our own future. This is a freedom fight worth breaking unjust laws for. It's worth headgames, meme wars, civil disobedience. So long as most of our communications channels remain in corporate hands, significant social change is impossible.

Economic institutions like the WTO, IMF and World Bank exist to govern international monetary flows. Now we need a United Nations based institution to govern global information flows; to keep the media megacorporations in check, to champion cultural diversity, and to enshrine "the right to communicate" as a fundamental human right in the constitutions of all free nations and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

KALLE LASN

PHOTO: JEFF HARRIS

Cat burglars & hustlers

The graffiti artist's creed

From a conversation between journalist Katie Haegele and Buford Youthward, a graffiti writer and monthly columnist for Art Crimes *(www.artcrimes.com). The topic: the mainstreaming of graffiti.*

On the mainstream media's tendency to equate graffiti with hip-hop culture:

It's really a historical, cultural and social *faux pas*. Many people feel that getting that media attention is all that matters, and if that's the case, then the false relationship between graffiti and what the media lumps together as "hip-hop" is a good thing – it generated a lot of press and publicity. But becoming "public" per se is not a healthy or accurate setting for graffiti – it's almost like the mafia, in that members want the acknowledgement of fame but know there is a consequence for violating the code. And the true graffiti writers don't talk the game, don't walk around rapping into microphones, or screaming their intentions into megaphones. They don't spin on their heads when they are creeping around at night nervously. They are at heart cat burglars and hustlers – sometimes literally. They are criminals and proud of the fact, boasting about their adventures in trespassing, vandalizing, engaging in petty and retail theft. They aren't break dancers and MCs. Graffiti just isn't hip-hop. That's the pill the world has to swallow.

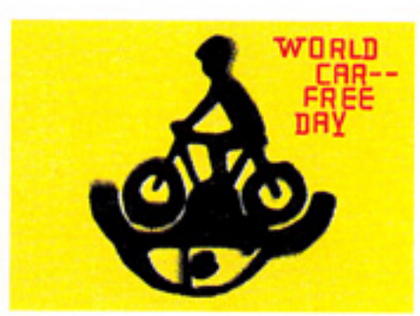
On what consumerism and the media have to gain by this deception:

If we take graffiti out of the hip-hop equation, does it affect hip-hop much? No. But look at how it affects graffiti – it becomes much harder to grasp and absorb. It becomes what it truly is, *sui generis*. Graffiti is a unique phenomenon capable of presenting and defending its own arguments.

I would rather read an honest article, an honest book; consume an honest record; view an honest film than endure a false statement splashed on an urban surface. But every time we commune with a corporate billboard we are welcoming a false gesture. It's an imposition that denies the individual, that denies the human spirit.

On graffiti as a response to the corporate messengers:

These are in fact little men, non-adults guilty of administering blind agendas. It's much more than individuality denied when one takes a 10,000-foot view of society. What we now have in fact is the real New World Order – the conforming classes versus the non-conforming classes – and graffiti acts as the trumpet to arms, a harbinger of great apathy and frustration made visible.



Two-minute Media Revolution

Dear Michael K. Powell, Chairperson (FCC - USA)
Dear David Colville, Chairperson (CRTC - CANADA)

We the people want access! It is our unwavering conviction that the public interest will best be served if the television licenses you grant contain the two-minute media provision. We want broadcasters to set aside two minutes of airtime every hour for citizen-produced advocacy messages in exchange for a renewed lease on the public airwaves.

We, the undersigned, put it to you, regulators of our airways, to set up a system of direct public access, or to let us know why you are unable to do so in a free and democratic society.

SIGN THE PETITION AT:
<ADBUSTERS.ORG/CAMPAIGNS/MEDIACARTA>

PHOTO: DAVE NIDDRIE

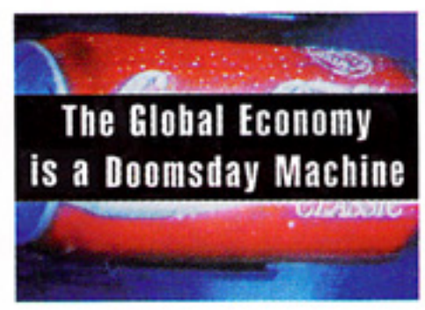
Meme Warfare Tonight

Television is the command center of consumer capitalism and the most powerful communications medium of our time. If we're serious about catalyzing a cultural mindshift, we *must* start interrupting those airwaves (and viewer's trances) with cognitive-dissonance bombs of all kinds: screens that go blank for 60 seconds; animated black spots that call for cultural revolution; hard-hitting social marketing messages that expose dysfunctional corporations, industries and global power centers like the the World Trade Organization and the World Bank. (See the *Culture Jammer's Video* for a sampling of such 15- 30- and 60-second mindbombs).

Right now CNN is the only US TV network that will sell us airtime. A 30-second slot costs $1,800 on *Headline News* and up to $7,500 on a flagship show like *Larry King Live*. Why don't we jammers get together, buy up one minute of CNN every day for 100 consecutive days and string together a running narrative of dissent the likes of which America has never seen? We could publicize these "emergency" one-minute broadcasts and garner a huge following of viewers who relish this kind of brash invasion of hitherto safe corporate turf (email <kono@adbusters.org> if want to discuss strategy or contribute to the war chest).

Only total meme warfare on all fronts can break through the current denial. It's time for a serious, dramatic gesture. If we do nothing, the mental environment will be a wasteland beyond saving within 15 years.

Kono Matsu



Burn The Cheese!

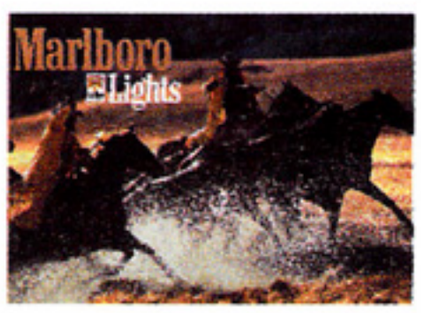
The Soy Bomb Manifesto, Abridged

PHOTO: GARY HERSHORN REUTERS

We are the Soy Bomb Nation, a global grassroots movement dedicated to reclaiming the media from the corporate cheesemongers and disrupting their mindless cheese products with explosions of artistic expression and individuality, which we call Soy Bombs.

A Soy Bomb is a spontaneous act of individuality that disrupts the flow of Corporate Cheese. Soy in Spanish means "I Am," and a Soy Bomb is an Explosion of SELF amidst a sea of cheese. Right now the mass media is a tool used to manipulate and pacify the public. But that night at the Grammys our comrade Michael Portnoy (above) proved WE THE PEOPLE can reclaim the media, and make a mockery of the Cheesemonger Conspiracy.

We must be ever-vigilant, ready to drop a Soy Bomb when the opportunity arises. Whenever you see a chance to get on camera or onto a microphone, you must SEIZE THE MOMENT and drop a big wet one on the Cheesemongers. Don't just stand there passively watching them throw cheese at you! Force them to look at you, to listen to you for a change! Tell them to BURN THE CHEESE! Anyone can be a a Soy Bomb Soldier. All it takes is creativity and the courage to seize the moment. The media BELONGS TO US, and it's time to take it back. <www.hiphopmusic.com/soybomb>



Indy Nation

The whole world is watching – really

It's hard to find a simple way to explain the Independent Media Center. It blends high-tech and grassroots, tactics and philosophy, participation and observation. But Jeff Perlstein thinks he's found the nutshell. "It's an *antidote*," he says.

Conceived of by "countermedia" voices at the 1996 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, and made real three years later for the Battle in Seattle, the IMC network has now grown to over 60 centers worldwide. On any given day in Chiapas or the Czech Republic or New Jersey, self-declared journalists will feed thousands of news clips – raw, front-line video footage, audio, photographs and reportage – to the nearest <indymedia.org> website. During the five-day G8 meeting in Genoa, Italy, the indymedia node received three million different visitors. An empire? "It's more like a network of networks," says Perlstein.

He and Sheri Herndon were there at the beginning. "We are breaking through the information blockade," says Perlstein, who is now the executive director of the Media Alliance in San Francisco. In the past, activists could only watch with frustration if, for example, police publicly denied the use of rubber bullets against peaceful protesters. "Now, when we have 500 sets of eyes watching and recording information to the contrary, it's a different story."

Many are familiar with indymedia's reporting, but less so with the movement's core philosophies. Above all else, says Perlstein, indymedia is a reaction to the mainstream media's tacit acceptance of a "dominator culture" that has as little time for indigenous peoples' complaints

PHOTO: HEATHER HADDON

of imperialism as it does for an individual's struggle to find identity amid commercial saturation.

In response, explains Herndon, indymedia opens up the storytelling to far more participants. Through on-line forums, journalists get feedback on their stories and the dialogue continues to grow. Here's another way to look at the indymedia revolution: it answers a need for a less mediated form of media.

"We have no space to talk," says Herndon. "Indymedia opens a window and lets us breathe in so much fresh air it's intoxicating."

So, two years on, what's next for the world's newest mass media? Herndon says indymedia journalists are working to make the difficult transition from an events-based media network into a steady source of global grassroots information and interaction. And they've begun to address the fact that the majority of world citizens can't access the web; there are more indymedia radio broadcasts now, and print pages for wide distribution.

But a qualitative shift has occurred: the news consumer can now be less object, more subject. Instead of being acted upon by a distant media empire, the people are rising up and acting with each other.

Aiden Enns

***SHERI HERNDON** works with the global network of 65 Independent Media Centers based on-line at <www.indymedia.org>.*

"Whoever is controlling the flow of information is controlling the global mental environment. The corporate media limits, it constricts, it keeps life force down. People don't feel they can participate. It's not democratic. It puts us straight into the context of consumerism. It's one against many, and there is no possibility for dialogue, no possibility for feedback. You have letters to the editor – I guess that kind of counts.

Indymedia represents an appropriate technology for information liberation: It's wanting to free information up. The model is not waiting for when it can work, for when we can buy a radio station or buy a television. It's about creating, *being* the change that we want to see.

To me, the greatest leverage point that we have is communications systems. The corporate mainstream media is going to be marginalized. They are going to have to find new identities for themselves, because they are not going to play the role they currently have in controlling the mental environment around the planet. That's because with projects like indymedia, where we are growing at a phenomenal rate, we are going to have an impact.

If you go to the indymedia site, you see that often the people are motivated by the fierce injustice in the world. They are also totally motivated by the passion and by the love. Strange to put that in the context of a radical news organization, but it's integral. There is just a lot of love. And that's part of the community we are building worldwide. In spite of differences in language, culture and politics, we all feel this kind of drive to create something different. People really do believe that another world is possible."

Are we too late?

"I have no definition for what is 'late' or 'too late.' Nor do I have definite criteria for what is 'success.' We must do what we can do. You light a candle under a pot of water. For a seemingly long time 'nothing happens.' At one point it begins to boil – a qualitative transformation. (It took only some six degrees rise in the average temperature to melt down the Ice Age.) So, you just keep up the pressure and hope the change occurs in your lifetime. But, if not, no energy ever disappears, no effort is ever wasted."

GEORGE GERBNER *is founder and president of the Cultural Environment Movement*

SIGNS

when the birds begin to walk
when the crows in their silk tuxedos
stand in the road and watch
as oncoming traffic swerves to avoid
the valley of dead things
when the geese reject the sky
and sit on the apron of highway 95
one wing pointing north the other south

and what does it mean this morning
when a man runs wild eyed from his car
shirtless and shoeless his palms spread wide
into the jungle of traffic into a world
gone awry the birds beginning to walk
the man almost naked almost cawing
almost lifting straining to fly

- Lucille Clifton

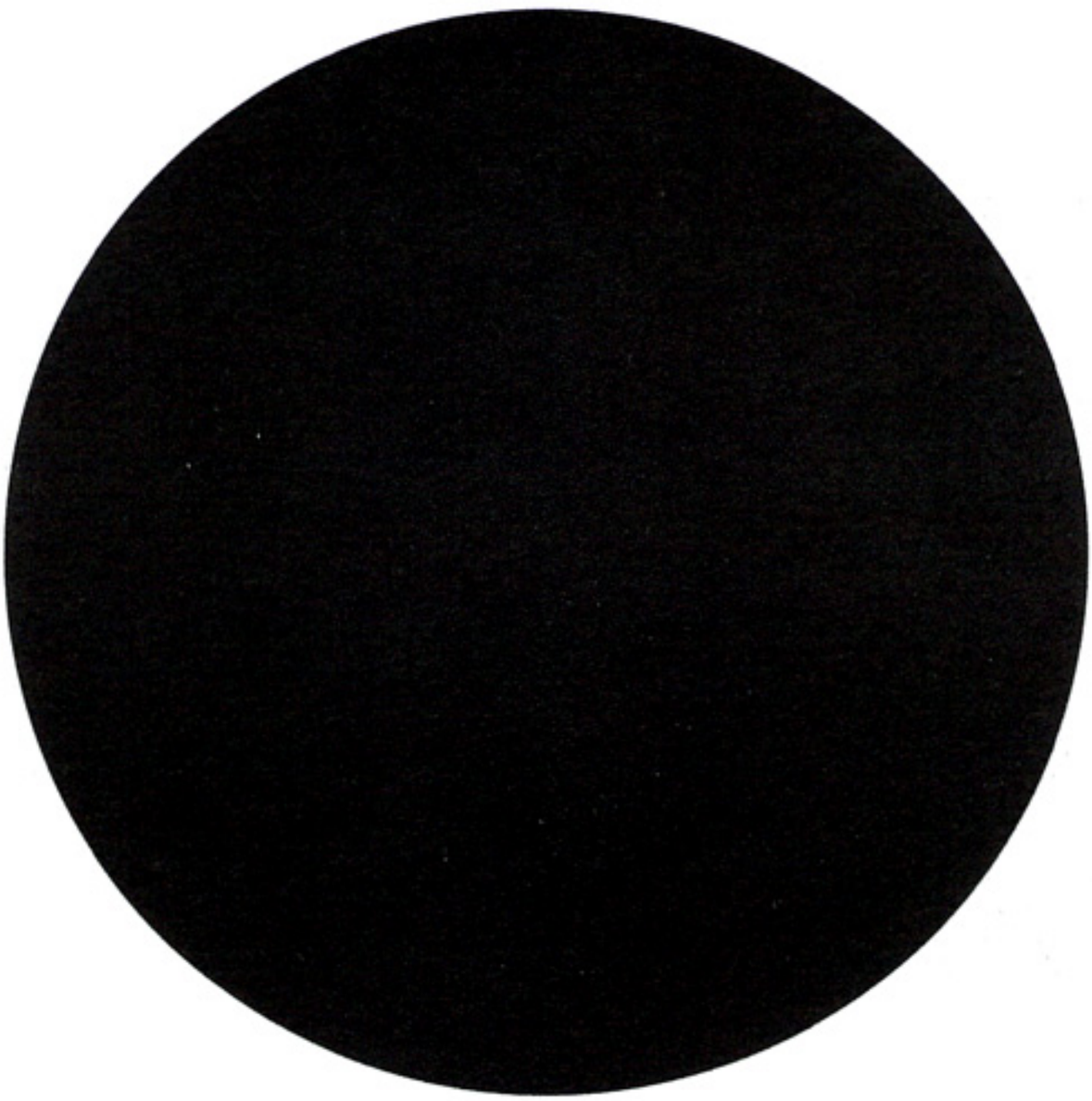
The Information War is a war we cannot afford to lose.

CLASSIC

PHOTO: DAVE NIDDRIE

EVERYBODY HAS A HAPPY SLEEP

PHOTO: JEFF HARRIS

: : : EVERYBODY DREAMS THE SAME HAPPY DREAM : : :

your imagination may not be your own